This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

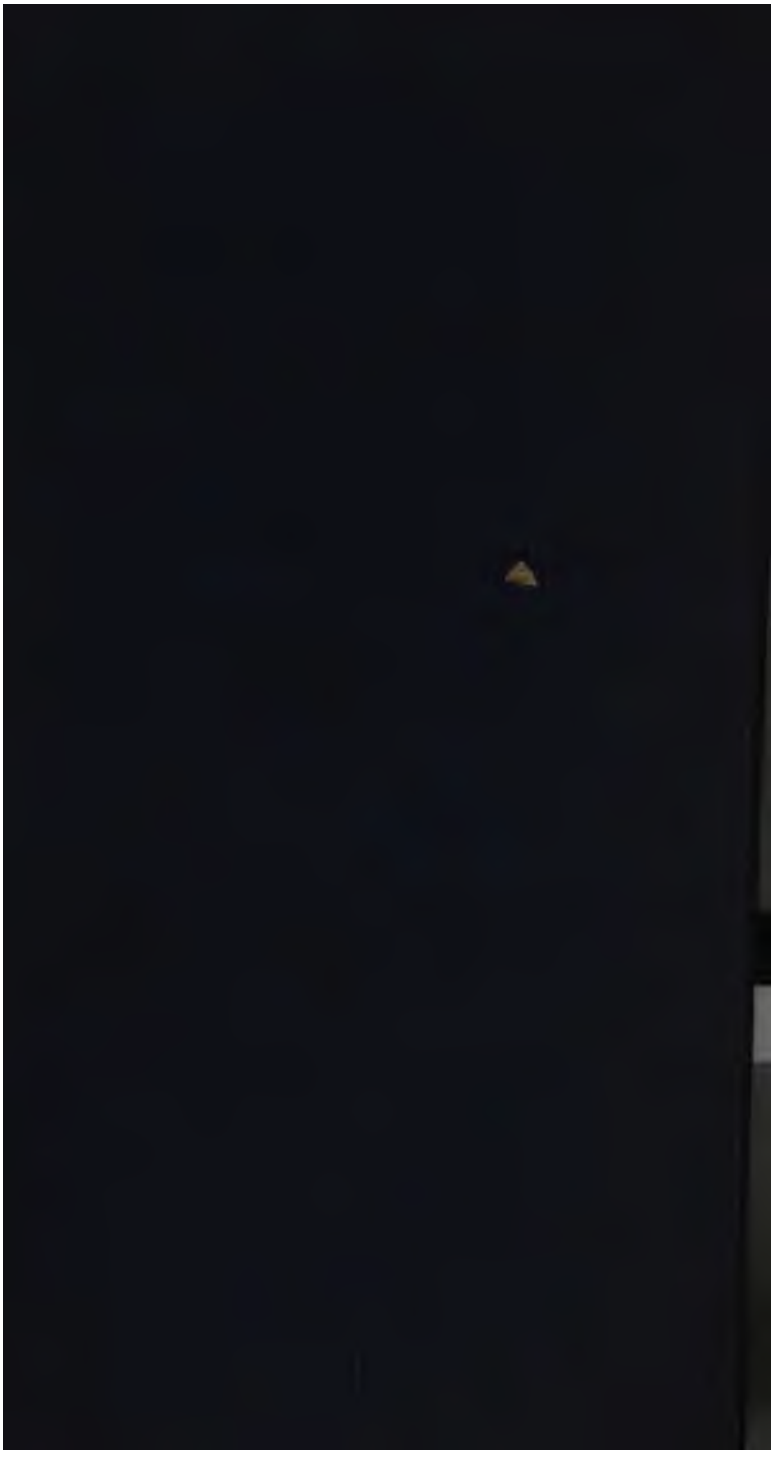
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



21496.47.9

Robt N. Cannon

HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY

TRIALS;

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE FAVOURITE OF NATURE,"

&c. &c.

To man in this his trial state,
The privilege is given,
When tost by tides of human fate,
To anchor fast on Heaven.

WATTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

PHILADELPHIA:

PUBLISHED BY ABRAHAM SMALL.

1824.

21496.45.9

HARVARD COLLEGE
SEP 6 1917
LIBRARY

Porcellian Club

TRIALS.

CHAPTER I.

"WHAT *do* you mean to do with that child, brother?" said Lady Vincent, one morning at breakfast, to the father of a tall, well-grown girl, about fifteen. "Miss Mathews told me yesterday that she was getting quite too much for her; and upon my word I think so too."

"Dear aunt," exclaimed Catherine, whilst her father was studying for a reply, which, in truly acknowledging that he did not know what to do with her, was to convey to the comprehension of his sister a gentle hint that he should be much obliged to her to take his daughter off his hands, "dear aunt, what occasion is there to do any thing with me? I am sure I am happy enough with my plants, and my books, and my poney, and my dear Fidele;"—and she began to caress a pretty little spaniel that lay at her feet: "and I give no trouble to any body, if they would but let me alone; but they never can for five minutes together. If I run off into the shrubbery to get a little air, there is Miss Mathews, and Miss Catherine, I am shocked! without your hat, without your gloves, and running off in that manner! is that

the proper way for a young lady of fashion to conduct herself?"

"And a very judicious monition too of Miss Mathews," said Mr. Dorrington, her father. "I only wish that she had possessed authority enough to cause her counsels to be followed; and that you, Miss Dorrington, could be pursuaded into the manners of a gentlewoman."

"It is a sad thing, indeed, Catherine," said Lady Vincent, adding her remonstrances, "it is a very sad thing to see a girl of your age (for you are now in your sixteenth year,)—I say it is a very sad, and a very *shocking* thing, to find you so insensible to what ought to be the conduct and manners of a young woman of rank and fashion."

"Why what ought they to be aunt?" she inquired with a starting tear, and a cheek the pure vermillion of which was heightened with extreme vexation.

"Catherine, I desire that you don't interrupt your aunt, but attend to what she wishes to say to you," observed Mr. Dorrington; "and do, for heaven's sake, put that little beast of a dog down;" and he snatched him with violence from the lap of his poor little mistress, who, too much in terror of her father to rebel, sat in mute expectation of what she was to hear, trying from a variety of motives to suppress the tears, which could not, after all, be repelled; but which every now and then broke out in a stifled sob, as her aunt and her father alternately laid down to her the various duties of an elegant young gentlewoman; duties which, it must be confessed, poor Catherine was sadly remiss in performing.

But while Lady Vincent and Mr. Dorrington are discussing a point in which our readers perhaps would

be as little interested as Catherine found herself, we will briefly narrate the few circumstances of importance which had as yet marked her history.

Catherine Dorrington was the daughter of the younger son of a noble family, who having but a younger son's portion, took, in lieu of money or family plate, all that quantity of family pride, which usually goes to those who get little else beside. Mr. Dorrington married well, and so far increased his fortune and his interest; and had it pleased Providence that his wife should have lived, he might, under her influence, have been a useful and ornamental member of society. As it was, he was what the world calls a *highly respectable* man. He went to church every Sunday, and paid his debts, and subscribed to all popular institutions which supported church and king, and set his face with becoming zeal against bible and missionary societies; and assembled round him none who had the slightest taint of suspicion attached to their political or religous opinions, viz. none who thought otherwise than that "whatever is, is right," and who shrunk with horror from the possibility of altering such a state of things. He did all this, and a great deal more; and, as was to be hoped and expected, after the proper performance of so much duty to the state, he was rewarded according to his deserts, and still went on praising and promoting those excellent things, which in the course of *this* world it occaslonally answers extremely well to applaud. Lady Catherine, his wife, was not altogether so orthodox in opinion as her husband. She was a woman of an observing and inquiring mind, and it occurred to her, now and then, in looking round her, that some things in the con-

duct of affairs both public and private, might be mended. She too went to church on a Sunday, as well as her husband; but as she did not say her prayers quite so audibly as he did, the chief part of the congregation at their parish church in the country, being composed principally of peasants and the poorer class of persons, who judge only from their outward senses, imagined that she was not quite so religious a person as he was. They thought it rather extraordinary too, that she should not be as devout as her husband, since she did amongst them a vast many more devout deeds than he performed; but she did not make the responses as loud as the clerk, and the hand which during the greater part of the service concealed her face, concealing also the silent tears with which many of her supplications were offered, "they could not certainly say for my lady that she seemed so *hearty like* in praying as his honour." Still they always ended with saying that she was "*an excellent good lady;*" an eulogium which, as far as human infirmity will permit its application, she certainly deserved. But she was called hence at a time when a marriage not eminently happy to a person of her views and feelings, was beginning to present a charm to her which endears many a union, that without it would hardly be supportable.

She had been a wife two years without the prospect of children. At length she had hopes of a family. A daughter was bestowed, scarcely to be blest, and wept over with tears of joy, when the mother was summoned from her child, and, a few days after its birth, expired.

The first lamentations of Mr. Dorrington upon this event were very sincere. He certainly loved his wife

with as much affection as a man who loved himself better than any thing else in the world could love another; and the circumstance of her leaving him with a poor little, helpless, wailing girl to provide for, considerably increased his regret. Added to greater misfortunes, he was much disappointed that the expected child had not been a son, whose future fate, during the time he had been looking for his appearance, had not been forgotten amidst the dreams of his ambition.

But all these visions were now as if they had never been! and the dispensations of *fate*, as he called these matters, being indispensable, Mr. Dorrington in due time began to reconcile himself to them, and so far to make the best of the case, as to transfer the projects of his ambition to the child which actually had arrived. The grand materials, as he conceived, for a woman's success in life, depended so entirely upon the share of beauty with which nature had enriched her, that, as time stole on, and daily looking in Catherine's extraordinary little face, without being able to predict much about it, or to say any thing in its praise but that the eyes were promising, he grew dejected and hopeless as far as respected his daughter; more particularly as the child herself presented, in the wildness and oddity of her disposition, the most hopeless of materials for moulding into an elegant young lady, who was to build her hopes of preferment upon her person and accomplishments.

In her father's estimation, then, poor Catherine had been a blank almost from the day of her birth; and Lady Vincent, her aunt, coinciding with him in this opinion, it was not considered as worth while to do more for her, than provide her with a governess,

and let her take her chance. During this time Mr. Dorrington was balancing in his mind the various merits of various ladies, with the design of promoting them to the honour of succeeding the departed Lady Catherine; a measure, his sister Lady Vincent strongly recommended, because, as she said, it was a step essential to his domestic happiness; but principally because it occurred to her that, as she was a widow, and had no children of her own, this unfortunate Catherine would, in the course of time, be shuffled off upon her, if there were no other person to take the charge of her. This last reason, though by far the strongest in her own mind, she of course said nothing about. But Mr. Dorrington had not known his sister so intimately for a number of years, without comprehending that some motive a little more lively than sisterly affection prompted her urgent desire to get him married again; and, with a slight degree of malice not wholly unnatural, he determined, while he expressed the warmest gratitude for her good wishes and interest in his behalf, to keep her as long as possible in suspense, as to how soon and how certainly he intended to follow her affectionate monitions. The consequence of all this procrastination was, that he found himself, while he was thinking about it, growing too old for this lady, and too prudent for that, with too many pretensions to be satisfied with this particular person, and scarcely sufficient to propose to the other, —in short, he gradually grew as indifferent to the matter, as gentlemen approaching their fiftieth year are apt to be; and consequently, after the doubts and debates of years, he at this particular juncture, finally informed his anxious sister, who came to make him a visit and repeat her counsels, that he believed

he should now totally dismiss from his mind all thoughts of a second marriage. The dismay, which such a decision might have been expected to inspire, was considerably lessened by the gradual manner in which Lady Vincent's mind had been prepared for it. She had long been visited with many misgivings as to the result of her brother's hesitation upon this point, and was not, therefore, wholly overpowered with disappointment when it was communicated to her. She said nothing that day upon the next proposition she had to make for his benefit; but, the following morning at breakfast, she introduced it in the manner we have related, with an inquiry as to what he intended to do with Catherine, who, during all this doubt, had, as we have observed, been taking her chance. And a very poor chance indeed it had been,—at least for Catherine. It might have offered something to some children—quiet, orderly, little bodies, who were contented to do as they were bid, and could go through their daily routine of tasks and practisings, without open rebellion to their instructors. But Catherine very early in the day set herself in such direct and determined opposition to Miss Mathews, that, perceiving it would be an eternal contest, that well-judging woman, after a due calculation of what she would get, and what she would lose, by going or staying, determined upon the latter; and therefore, as a necessary consequence, that she might live in peace with her constant companion, she made up her mind to take no cognisance, or as little as possible, of the conduct of her young charge. The extraordinary quickness of the child's abilities, and the eager delight with which she pursued every thing that was new, till its novelty was exhausted,

made her so apt a scholar, that, without a particle of application, she soon gathered pretty nearly as much as Miss Mathews possessed the power of bestowing in the way of tuition; and long before she had attained her sixteenth year, she had learned to hold the acquirements of her governess in the most sovereign contempt; affording infinite amusement to the two Miss Johnsons, the rector's daughters, by the style in which she rendered Miss Mathews's French, and the imitation she gave of her singing. As all this early satire and criticism was rather more than suspected by Miss Mathews, it was not to be expected that she should cast a very favourable eye upon her pupil. In truth she hated her; and but that the comforts of her situation were too real and substantial to be given up, she would not have retained it, under the consciousness of her total inadequacy to fulfil its duties, and under the conviction of being appreciated according to her insufficiency, by the very child she was deputed to govern. Too narrow-minded to consider and forgive the errors of extreme and ungoverned youth, she exercised what little power she possessed, in a manner the most insufferably galling to a high spirited girl like Catherine;—always, as the poor child had remarked, teazing her about trifles, such as wearing her hat and gloves when she went out of the house, holding up her head, &c. &c.; to all of which minutiæ she attached an importance which the shrewd mind of Catherine clearly saw they did not deserve, and which she consequently treated with a scornful indifference equally improper to be applied to them.

The force of her character made all her defects so very obvious, and they were unfortunately of a

make the round of the lawns and shrubberies, to ascertain where the birds had nests, in order that she might have the dear delight of watching, from some covert at hand, how their young charge proceeded and prospered; if Fidele was to be taught to fetch and carry, or she were to have a capital gallop through the park on the poney, the first point to be made out was, whether papa was sure to be out of the way: for so often had she been caught by papa, in some such adventures as these, and so angrily had she been lectured for them, that she had at last acquired a habit of eluding his observation, in every thing she wished to perform. It was not only her faults, or what she knew that he would consider as such, but her virtues also that she secluded from his notice.

A peculiar tact seemed to teach her that she could not be pleasing in her father's eyes. Hence she sedulously veiled from his observation many little acts of charity and kindness, which she performed amongst his dependents, who, having a shrewdness in detecting the merits or demerits of their superiors, which those superiors little suspect, soon learnt to love Catherine, and feel a great deal of pity for her truly pitiable situation.

To render this situation as bearable as possible, Catherine had made to herself all the resources she could; not, we must confess, from the laudable principle of making the best of existing circumstances, since principles she had none; every thing in the way of motive coming to this poor child by chance: but because her mind had that elasticity which so forcibly resists suffering, that it seems in the very midst of misery as if it were determined to enjoy. She was fond of reading, fond of music, fond of painting.

In short, she possessed in an eminent degree those tastes of which the houses of the great commonly afford the gratification.

Mr. Dorrington had an excellent library, and during the London season he gave occasionally very good concerts; at which, Catherine, though a child, was always permitted to be a listener, it having been discovered that music, amongst the fine arts, was that to which her mind more particularly evinced a bias.

Her rapture at the style in which she heard particular songs and other compositions executed, soon emulated her to be an imitator of what afforded her so much pleasure, and far from an unsuccessful one. She performed infinitely worse before her father than she did before any one else, because she felt an incapability of pleasing him, which insensibly palsied every effort she made; but there were persons who could find a delight in hearing her, even at this early age, warble in her own sweet and natural manner, such songs as had particularly struck her fancy, and which were therefore performed with a degree of taste and skill which promised almost every thing when a little more matured.

Besides her love for music and reading, the latter of which propensities was indulged in the most indiscriminate and dangerous manner, from the stolen visits she made in his frequent absences to her father's library, and the utter incapacity of her governess to direct or control her taste in this respect, Catherine was, in the largest sense of the word, the child of gaiety and glee. She loved a laugh better than any thing; and as young persons with this disposition, wholly left to themselves, are not very cir-

cumspect as to whom or what they laugh at, she had acquired a habit of amusing herself with every thing and every body that was ridiculous, to a degree which, without one single ill-natured trait in her character, was sufficient to have made her hated by every five out of six persons who came in her way.

To laugh alone is generally a vain attempt. It became, therefore, essential to obtain some allies in this species of pastime, and, when in the country, she was never without them, having associated herself, (though in a clandestine manner, her father holding them all in civil but strong contempt,) in a strict league of amity with the rector's daughters, the two Miss Johnsons, a few years her senior. To steal down, when Mr. Dorrington was gone out to dinner, and take tea with these young ladies, and give them imitations of Miss Mathews, and the music master; or to smuggle them up to her own room, there in like manner to descant upon every body they knew, who had the misfortune to be in any degree absurd, formed a prominent part of her stock of pleasures.

And thus, with little variation passed the first period of Catherine's life. It was now to be diversified with an important change; for after many days of consideration on the part of her father, he came to a decision of following his sister's advice, and placing his daughter as she recommended, with a Mrs. Vernon, who kept a finishing school for young ladies in the vicinity of Hyde Park.

CHAPTER II.

After innumerable tears over Fidele, and the poney, and the two Miss Johnsons, who stood next in succession in Catherine's love, and even a parting embrace with Miss Mathews, who, being looked at for the last time, received the sympathy which Dr. Johnson has pronounced to be due to every thing of which we say "*it is the last,*" she was taken to town by Lady Vincent, and with more monitions than pocket money, deposited by her in the care of Mrs. Vernon. Every thing was very strange, and very melancholy, for the first few days; but at the end of that time the joyful, happy temper of Catherine began to prompt some wish of attaching herself to any body who looked good-humouredly upon her, and with whom she might have the indulgence of exercising her faculties for speech and laughter.

Such an ally presented herself in the person of Miss Augusta Belmont, a young lady of sixteen, who very speedily made great advances in Catherine's favour by the notice she took of her: and at this period of life friendship being somewhat rapid in its growth, at the end of a week they were connected together in every project and every pursuit. Augusta announcing herself to be "most particularly attached to Catherine Dorrington;" asserting at the same time that "she was the sweetest girl in the world;" and Catherine, on her part, returning to the best of her power, in a proportionate degree, all this

weight of love and approbation with which she was honoured.

The first half year passed away, and Catherine was so much charmed with her friend, as to make i an urgent request to her father that she might b permitted to bring her home with her for the vaca tion; an indulgence which was granted, to the stil further cementing of their already indissoluble af fection. It was during this vacation that Mr. Dor rington first began to imbibe hopes of his daughter for so visible and striking was the improvement ir her person, manners, and accomplishments, since he parted with her, that without being blinded by pa rental partiality, of which his bitterest enemy could not accuse him, he safely might anticipate the cer tainty of her proving an object of decided attraction and admiration, when another year or two had still further improved her present advantages. The style of her beauty was of a kind peculiarly calculated to please. Hitherto indeed he had been doubtful about it; but it was chiefly the strange inattention she had manifested in making the most of it, by her utter dis regard to appearance and manner, that had caused him to despair of her success in the way of personal attraction; for he had always felt sure that a woman with such a pair of eyes as Catherine possessed, might have done a great deal for herself, if she had been one degree beyond a simpleton, which, in his extreme dissatisfaction with her, he had sometimes thought his unfortunate daughter could hardly be considered.

But now she was pretty nearly all he could wish in this respect; and in truth, when he came to peruse Mrs. Vernon's half-yearly bills, and observed the variety of items which went towards the formation

of the elegant young gentlewoman, his imagination so much panted to behold her, he foresaw some danger of her rather outstepping his wishes. Two hundred pounds per annum was the nominal sum at which Mrs. Vernon made it a great obligation to receive a pupil; but this was nothing in comparison with the tremendous *et-ceteras* which augmented the account, and upon which Mr. Dorrington, desirous as he was of seeing his daughter highly accomplished, could not forbear from bestowing a few invectives. However, as he considered Catherine to be now sufficiently gifted with discretion to understand in some degree her own interest, he took care, in a brief but very energetic way, to impress upon her mind that the elegant endowments which cost him such a quantity of money must be looked upon by her as so much stock in trade, with which in due season she was to set up for herself, and endeavour to obtain a husband and a good establishment.

Upon the subject of husbands and establishments, Catherine had heard too much, in the last six months of her life, not to have given them more attention than it had ever occurred to her to bestow upon them before. Augusta Belmont talked of nothing else. Mrs. Vernon, in reproving any misdemeanour, always suggested the possibility of its interfering with the prospect of an establishment. The French governess, as the extreme of terror, would hold out to a delinquent the chance of her not getting married. In fact, the idea of marriage, as the end and object of all they were doing, was so interwoven in the education of these girls, that they were in a manner compelled to turn their thoughts to it, as the only thing they had to live for.

The consequence was, that they were a great deal better acquainted with the names of the officers who were quartered in the adjoining barracks than with the responses in their catechism; and very soon after their return to school, Augusta imparted to Catherine, that through the medium of the French teacher, she had received a very impassionate epistle from a Captain Harvey, which she submitted to the perusal of her friend, for the purpose of hearing her opinion upon the subject.

Next to having a lover herself, there is scarcely a moment in the life of a very young girl more fraught with interest, than that in which she is informed that her intimate companion has obtained one. She hails it as a sure prelude that her own triumph in the same way is not far off, and her congratulations are generally given with a joy which sufficiently testifies their sincerity.

Much was to be asked, and much to be told, upon the momentous subject Augusta had just unfolded. The sum and substance of it was, that she had long believed Captain Harvey to be to the last degree in love with her. In fact there was another very handsome officer in the barracks, whom she also suspected of an attachment to her; but the Captain, in putting his passion into black and white, had proved it to be most indubitable, and therefore, upon the whole, she thought she could not do otherwise than answer his letter.

Catherine paused a little before she seconded this proposition, and resumed the epistle, which she had only looked over in a cursory manner, so much had she been interested in what Augusta had to tell.

It conveyed a profusion of protestations and pas-

sion, which Catherine conceived might not be the worse in Augusta's estimation for being told in most intolerably bad spelling; a charitable opinion that prevented her expressing the astonishment she really felt at perusing this document of his tenderness.

The other inamorato of whom Augusta had spoken, though she admitted him to be by far the handsomer man, did not appear to have inspired her with any very warm sentiments in his favour: the reason for which, as far as Catherine could then learn, existed principally in his being only an ensign, and in his not having furnished her with any testimonials of his attachment.

It appeared to be only upon the credit of his looks, when he saw her at church, or in the walks in the Park, which for the benefit of their health the girls generally took every morning before breakfast, that her opinion of his being her captive was founded. Upon so slender a basis indeed did this conquest appear to rest, that Catherine quite coincided with her in thinking that Captain Harvey was the only person to consider about, if she had any intention of returning the affection she believed herself to have inspired.

To the Captain therefore she directed all the force of her charms. She was a very pretty girl, with an unbounded fund of spirits, and the sort of good humour which thoughtlessness and extreme youth naturally inspire. After a great deal of nonsense had been written on both sides, the Captain imparted a desire to be favoured with an *interview*, which Mademoiselle would accomplish, he said, "the next time the young ladies walked in the Park, if Augusta had any friend in whom she could confide, and who would accompany her in the walk he was desirous to

take with her, but which, his great regard for propriety would have made him ready to expire upon his own sword, before he would have asked her to take with him alone."

Such a piece of delicacy on his part, Augusta affected extremely to admire; though she lamented very much that it would render Catherine's walk, (for of course she was to be her companion, as being her bosom friend, her other self) rather a wearisome one. At last, she hit upon a very bright expedient, which Catherine did not oppose; for, though she had not breathed it to any living creature, in fact, scarcely avowed it to herself, she was not so unlike the rest of her companions as not to have a favourite amongst the names with which they were all of them so perfectly familiar; and, long before Augusta named Mr. St. Aubyn as the person who, jointly with Captain Harvey, was her devoted admirer, Catherine had been so much struck with his elegant person, as to have conceived a kind of preference for him, which made her not quite a disinterested adviser in recommending her friend to consider the case hopeless as far as *he* was concerned in it. She was not authorised to give this counsel from any cause she had to suppose her *penchant* was returned by the object of it; for, except by the earnest gaze he cast upon her figure when she encountered him in her walks, she had no reason to believe that St. Aubyn knew there was such a person as herself in existence.

But as girls are commonly prompt enough in perceiving the exact degree of attention they excite, she had no difficulty in persuading herself that St. Aubyn not only did not admire Miss Belmont, but that he admired somebody else. This opinion, however,

she had the discretion to keep to herself, till it was rather more justified by facts. A circumstance which there was now a probability that it would very shortly be; for, to her concealed but indescribable joy, Augusta announced, as her expedient for making Catherine's part in the affair a less stupid one, that on the morning proposed for their wandering a little way apart from Mademoiselle, and accidentally meeting him in the park, Captain Harvey should be accompanied by his particular friend Ensign St. Aubyn, who would be so obliging, she expected, as to take her companion off her hands.

This arrangement, through the medium of the complaisant Mademoiselle, was completed without any difficulty. The reply, on the part of the Captain, was filled with such a more than usual supply of flames and darts, and a superfluity of protestations of regard, that it was rather difficult to arrive at his meaning, and to discover whether he intended to avail himself of the opportunity Augusta proposed. In short, it appeared to Catherine, that he was not altogether prepared for her taking him seriously when he pressed for an interview, or that, since he had urged this measure, he had changed his mind; for nothing but disinclination or indifference to it, could, as she imagined, have suggested the variety of melancholy possibilities which he feared might step between him and the happiness of giving Miss Belmont the proposed meeting. But he concluded with a tolerably intelligible assurance, that if none of the many obstacles he expected should intervene, he would be punctual at the appointed time and place.

Though she was thoughtless and inconsiderate to

the last degree, Catherine had too much delicacy of feeling not to shrink (as she found Augusta really in earnest) from being a participator in her scheme; and, as she was not blinded by any views whatever relative to the Captain, she used her utmost exertions in endeavouring to prevail upon Augusta to abandon her design, assuring her, and with truth, that were she in her place, and did not feel herself restrained by any stronger motive, pride alone would render it impossible for her to make such advances to a man, who admitted a possibility of not being able to avail himself of them.

But Miss Belmont was quite inflexible in her purpose; and Catherine's honour, as she conceived, in the great magnanimity of sixteen, being at stake, she yielded to her remonstrances at her wavering friendship, and agreed to abide by her original promise of being a party in the affair.

The appointed morning at length arrived. A morning that seemed made for such an adventure. It was in the early part of the month of May, "when all things gay and sweet appear.—" Never had the young heart of Catherine responded more rapturously to the universal joy which pervaded the face of nature; and seldom, amidst the loveliness of nature, had any thing more charming been looked upon than Catherine herself. Augusta was handsome; and the advantages her beauty received from dress, gave an air of fashion to her appearance, which rendered her a decided object of attraction. It was almost impossible to pass her unnoticed. But Catherine, in her simple straw hat, and her school girl's frock, might have stolen by unobserved. Yet if but once you had caught the glance of that large dark eye, you must

have looked again—and yet again—for still at every gaze some undiscovered charm would break upon you in the variety of its expression, till, doubtful whether it were more captivating in its usual languid sweetness, or lighting up with animation and fire at every passing emotion, you could have decided upon nothing, but that only to look upon it was delightful. And with these dark luxuriant eyes, the hair, the features, the complexion, so well assimilated. Those raven tresses of the deepest black might have contrasted to advantage with a skin of lily fairness; but they assorted better with the clear soft brown of the sweet face they shaded. This tint of complexion had been, indeed, the occasion of much grief to Mr. Dorrington, till the inquiries made amongst his friends, and his own observation, enabled him to perceive that a brunette may possess the greatest attractions.

At length the young ladies were summoned by Mademoiselle to accompany the rest of the pupils in their usual walk. Two or three other teachers were generally of the party; but, on this morning, she had forgotten to enlist any one in the service, that she herself might be under the necessity of paying so much attention to the younger ones, as not to be aware of the occasional wanderings on the part of the elder. In this state of things, Augusta and Catherine had no difficulty, in the abstraction into which persons conversing on any very interesting topic are liable to fall, of losing their way a little; a forgetfulness which Madame whispered to Augusta must upon no account exceed an hour, as at the end of that time she should infallibly return home.

They walked gradually from their companions to-

wards the appointed spot; but, though they went on slowly, they proceeded so long without perceiving any thing like a red coat, that they both of them anticipated that some of the contingencies, for which the captain prepared Augusta, had actually occurred.

At last they descried two figures at a distance, walking towards them very fast; and they were soon enabled to decide upon its being Captain Harvey and his friend St. Aubyn. But although Catherine was prepared for the probability of his being so accompanied, and had in the first instance expected to be very much delighted by such a circumstance, the actual fact was very different from the imagination of it. She did not know, till they were put to the proof, how respectable and feminine her feelings were. She had been so much in contact with folly, so much in the habit of hearing of love and lovers, and so impressed by the course of her education with an idea, that to entrap and aim at the other sex was the only proper object of a woman's existence, that she did not thoroughly perceive, till this instant, (however an intuitive sense of delicacy might afford her occasional glimpses of it) how inconsistent with the modesty which really formed a feature in her character, was the situation in which she had so heedlessly placed herself.

She felt her heart throb with agitation at every step that brought them nearer. She implored Augusta to return, and not to meet them; she declared with vehemence that she would go back by herself, and she actually broke away from the grasp with which Augusta retained her arm, intending to realise this resolve; but she poured upon her such heavy accusations of treachery and ill will as she had not the

courage to endure; and shaking in every nerve, overpowered with shame and confusion, her cheeks the colour of the deepest crimson, and scarcely able to keep from crying, Catherine found herself within a few paces of St. Aubyn, and in the next instant a mutual introduction by Augusta of all parties took place.

Captain Harvey offered his arm to Miss Belmont, and St. Aubyn very politely made the same overture to Catherine, which she for a long time declined with many an embarrassed "No, I thank you," till Augusta's loud laugh, and her own intense feeling of the awkwardness she was exhibiting, induced her to end the matter by accepting it; and his behaviour being perfectly respectful, she began to be more at her ease. It has been said that "truth is uppermost," and it certainly is; for no perfectly genuine emotion can be concealed or misinterpreted. St. Aubyn clearly understood what was passing in the heart of Catherine, and evinced, by the delicacy of his attention and discourse, how much he respected it. But his was indeed the most delicate, the most refined of minds; gentle and persuasive, tender and affectionate, adorned too with beauty at once manly and elegant, it was not without awaking a new and charming interest in the ardent affections of this impassioned girl that he could address her. The walk that for Augusta was nothing but the foolery of an hour, was to Catherine the beginning of destiny, the momentous interval in which every overwhelming passion of her soul awoke to life.

They continued their ramble; St. Aubyn and his companion every instant becoming better acquainted with the character of each other; Augusta and the

Captain had very little to learn on either side of their respective merits, beyond what their epistles had revealed. At length Catherine heard a clock strike, which reminded her that the time Mademoiselle had fixed for their return was arrived; and they retraced their steps, still accompanied by the gentlemen, who when the young ladies arrived in sight of their party, took their leave, not without proffering some intreaties for a similar indulgence another morning. The sentiments with which St. Aubyn began to inspire Catherine, were of a character too deep, too sincere, for the sort of frivolous, flirting intercourse Augusta had established with her admirer. Though St. Aubyn had only been known to her an hour, she felt as if his good opinion was almost essential to her existence; and she verily believed she could have suffered any thing rather than have incurred the hazard of forfeiting it. In defiance, therefore, of the frowns and ill suppressed anger of Augusta, she gave on her part a decided negative to any repetition of these clandestine engagements.

St. Aubyn looked a little disappointed, but it was only for an instant. He was gratified in his heart at her refusal; for Augusta being then engaged in conversation with the Captain, he took the hand of Catherine, and in a low voice, "I can scarcely say I regret your determination," said he, "because I know that it is right; and because I know how much more deeply I should regret than a disappointment to myself, any thing that tended to lower my sentiments of you."

As he said this, he resigned her hand with an expression of regard more valuable to her than would have been the most enthusiastic protestations. She

left him elevated in her own estimation, for she was satisfied that she stood high in his. She left him in a state of mind for which happiness would be but a faint expression; never had she known any earthly feeling like the dawn of those young emotions. It was in vain that Augusta reproached, and almost reviled her, for her apostacy to the cause, in not consenting to repeat their present imprudence. Nothing had power to disturb her felicity: though sufficiently irritable and impetuous when assailed, she was not now to be provoked to anger; she seemed to tread on air, and to behold nothing about her but visions of beauty. The atmosphere she breathed appeared to her more soft than usual—the sun more glorious—every human face more cheerful. She saw nothing but a world filled with every thing that was lovely and joyful; and thus an enthusiasm, which as yet was only delicious, began to usurp the dominion over her.

Oh, sweet emotions, why is the hand of fate for ever against ye! Are ye too etherial for these grosser realms? Is it only in a brighter sphere, and nearer to the divine source from whence ye emanate, that your fruition is to be complete?

CHAPTER III.

It is not requisite to enter into a minute detail of this period of Catherine's life. She occasionally saw St. Aubyn, but she never met him clandestinely: and her attachment would possibly have died away, if on going to spend the vacation in company with her aunt, Lady Vincent, at the house of a distant relation, she had not found him on terms of the most intimate acquaintance there. Under these circumstances their acquaintance rapidly increased; and their intercourse not being interrupted by Lady Vincent, who appeared to consider and treat Catherine as a child, it was carried on with a constancy and fervour which soon ripened on his side into a declaration of attachment, and on hers into an acceptance of it. But as attachment on the part of Catherine was not a matter of small moment, and as first impressions on an enthusiastic mind have commonly something attractive in the freshness and bloom they exhibit, it may not be uninteresting to permit her to be her own narrator in the history of her heart, by presenting to our readers a letter, written about a month after she and St. Aubyn had been inmates of the same house, to her friend Augusta; with whom, as in duty bound, most of her emotions had been deposited, as they rose in succession in her mind, in return for the confidential despatches she received relative to her friend's affair with the Captain.

"I was very grieved, indeed, my dear Augusta,

to find by your last letter, that Captain Harvey was a man of so deceitful a mind. Certainly, as you say, it will be no difficult task to renounce a person of this inconstant temper; and the spirit with which you speak of his conduct, testifies that you have already advanced a great way towards estimating him as he deserves. Oh how I wish you were as happy as I am, and that such another as St. Aubyn, were in reserve for you. He improves upon me every day and every hour—and all that I am afraid of is, that he should see how dear he is to me; for you know, Augusta, till he has declared his attachment, it would be very improper that he should even guess at mine. But what will become of me when he has declared it? Only think of papa, and my aunt, and every body that belongs to me. But I cannot bear to think of it. I think only of the present hour—the dear—the real present. I know that he is near me—and that, when we are separated, we shall shortly meet again—we are within reach of each other. To-morrow will be another happy day, I say to myself, when I retire for the night—for to-morrow I shall see him again. Surely, Augusta, this is too delightful to last! I must be ill, or die—ah! it will be worse than that—I shall live to contend and be contended with—terribly, cruelly contended with, before I shall be permitted to look upon St. Aubyn as my husband, St. Aubyn my husband!—ah, what words are those, and with what confidence am I repeating them, as if the fact were sure, and *he* has never uttered such a thought. Oh if he should not have such a thought! —what will become of me! But I think, Augusta, I could stake my existence upon the certainty of his loving me. It was only last night, when they were

all set down to cards, I stole through the viranda into the lawn. I did *just* look round the room, only to see where he was; for I could not have gone out if his attention had been fixed upon me, as he might have thought I wished him to follow me; and I should not have liked him to have thought that, you know. But he was looking over music at the pianoforte, and never saw me, and so I went. But though I would not for the world that he should think I wished him to join me, I knew he would do so. I knew that he would soon miss me; and I knew, also, that he would soon find me. What a curious thing this kind of affection is! It seems as if there were an instinct between two people, which prompts them to know the very thoughts of each other. But I am moralising, which I know you do not like. I have acquired a habit of that lately. Indeed, I have wondered very much, since I felt attached, that so many bitter and severe things have been said to the disadvantage of love. If I know any thing of myself, there is not a faculty of my mind, nor a disposition of my heart, which is not the better for it. The happiness it inspires, makes me pleased with every body, and I want to see them as delighted as myself. I want every body to be happy—indeed, I wonder how any body here can be otherwise, when St. Aubyn is at hand, and they can see and speak to him. But what was I going to tell you, Augusta? My mind is sadly wandering—such a crowd of thoughts come rushing upon it—but you must forgive me; for I have no one to speak to but you, and when I begin I say every thing that comes uppermost. Oh! I was going to tell you about last night. We had such a delightful walk! for he soon joined me in my ramble. It was

just such a night as Shakspeare has described in the Merchant of Venice, and, if you recollect the part I allude to, you will not wish me to say more in its praise. But as I know you have no great taste for the romantic, I will not tire you with telling what I felt, as I stole along amidst the sweet shrubs and flowers, all looking so lovely in the pale moonlight, and hung upon St. Aubyn's arm, sometimes talking, but more often silent; for I had thoughts which could not express themselves in words, but rather found a vent in tears. Yet tears so delicious, that never have I known a bliss so exquisite as while they were stealing down my cheeks. It was St. Aubyn's tenderness that made me weep. Oh! he has the softest, the gentlest of minds. I told you in my last that he had constituted himself my tutor, and in that capacity he has lent me many sweet books to read, and then we talk them over, and we did so last night. We were speaking of Milton, which he wished me rather to study than merely peruse; and he began to repeat to me the Penseroso, after having hinted, though very delicately (as its owners are relations of mine,) at the insipid manner in which time passed in the house we at present inhabit,

> "But hail, thou goddess, sage and holy;
> Hail, divinest Melancholy!
> Whose saintly visage is too bright
> To hit the sense of human sight,"—

he repeated, raising his fine, expressive eyes as he spoke, and looking so in unison with the words he uttered! Oh, Augusta, such a thought came across me at that moment! I cannot put it into words, it was so vague and indistinct; but it suggested to me

the idea of St. Aubyn's death, and our everlasting separation; and how, or why, or wherefore, I cannot tell, but something within me prompted a supplication, that we might never be disunited in this world, or the next, and I internally ejaculated these few words, 'Save him—save us both.' And while all this was passing in my mind, I was constrained to hide my face with my hand, to conceal the strange agitation I felt; but it soon passed away with a heavy sigh, and a few silent tears; and St. Aubyn did not observe it, and I was again very happy. He went on repeating to me the greater part both of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, stopping every now and then, and looking under my hat, to see how he affected or pleased me; and when he perceived either the smile or tear, it seemed so to gratify him! only that once or twice he sighed, and uttered something like a fear for me. Once he said, on discovering me very near to sobbing, 'If disappointment, or sorrow of any kind should be your fate, ah! what a heart it would have to work upon!'

"'But who would disappoint you?' he continued, after a short silence; 'Who *could* grieve you?'

"Oh, Augusta, was I wrong in my answer!—Tell me—yet don't—oh don't tell me—for I know that I was wrong; but had I been to die for uttering them, I could not have restrained the words which sprung from my heart to my lips, when he so sweetly, so feelingly, articulated the inquiry, 'Who *could* grieve you?'

"'Not you,' I said, 'you never could or would.' 'Never!' he exclaimed with energy, 'never, while God grants me life or reason.'

"He had yet more to say; I know that he had yet

much more to say; for he took my hand, and he uttered my name—'Catherine!' he said; but, ere he could utter another word, I heard myself loudly called for, by some one approaching, and I hurried on towards the house.

"We were met almost immediately by Lady Vincent, who, for the first time, I believe, suspected that there was some endearing connexion between us. I will not add here, in contrast to what I have already said, the unpleasant scene I underwent with her in private upon the subject; but briefly tell you that I braved all her indignation, and kept my own counsel, and acknowledged nothing; and, finally, went to my own room, and forgot every thing but what related to St. Aubyn and to happiness. Farewell, Augusta, you shall soon hear again from

"Your most affectionate

"CATHERINE."

That, after a month of intimate intercourse with a very young woman, whose affections he had won, a man of strict honour should speedily approach to some decision, was a measure to be expected. Accordingly, in a very few days after the preceding letter had been dispatched by Catherine to *her* confidante, we find St. Aubyn unbosoming himself to *his* particular friend; which narration will pretty nearly conclude all we have to say on this part of our story.

"You will scarcely be able to remember, my dear F——, a silly sort of adventure which Harvey and I fell into with two girls at Mrs. Vernon's boarding school. You heard his account of the matter, and you may recollect, if you can recall to mind any

thing about it, that I, though a participator in the matter, had very little to report as to my share of it. The fact was, this very foolish business was the means of making me acquainted, in some degree, with the mind of a girl, whose appearance and personal charms had already captivated my eye. I cannot tell you the impression she made upon my fancy, it was so strange, so unaccountable. I knew very well, in the first five minutes I talked with her, that I should fall in love. But that I had done a great many times, and got over it extremely well. I anticipated as speedy a recovery in the present instance; and I left her, though charmed to excess with the nature, the simplicity, the *naïveté* of her character, yet with a full persuasion that she never would be any thing to me. But I could not drive her image from my fancy. She was so unlike all the girls I ever knew; so pleasing in her difference of character, so captivating in her peculiar style of beauty, in a word, she was so original, and so delightful, that before I knew what I was about, I found myself intriguing to get an invitation to meet her here, understanding she was to accompany her aunt, Lady Vincent, in her annual visit to this place.

And here I have been for more than a month her intimate companion; for whether it is that Lady Vincent looks upon her as too much of a child to excite the serious attention of any man, or that I am not a dangerous person, she has not only never opposed the familiarity of intercourse into which we have fallen, but has contributed to increase it, by constituting me in some sort the instructor of her niece, by requesting me to accompany her music with my flute, to examine her progress in French and Italian,

and to perform various other offices of friendship; at the same time observing that 'Kate is at that awkward age, which is just too old for the nursery, and too young for the drawing room; and it really is kind in the extreme in any friend to endeavour to draw her into notice, and thus prepare her for that introduction to society which must now shortly take place.'

"Were I a man of ample fortune, or large expectations, I should understand all this; but Lady Vincent knows that this is not the case, so that I must acquit her of all blame, but on a point she cannot help—which is, her ignorance of human nature; for how it is possible for any body less than stupid to imagine a man in habits of intimacy for a whole month with such a girl as Catherine Dorrington, without attaching himself to her, heart and soul, I cannot conceive. Our host and hostess, Mr. and Mrs. B——, see it all, I am persuaded; but besides that they consider it no business of theirs, they are just the kind of persons to think a love affair a matter of course between two young people who happen to be disengaged, and a pleasant enough sort of manner of passing away a summer. So here I am, my dear F——, in a way to end the affair a vast deal more seriously than I began it. In short, the matter is now in a train to be disposed of in the old fashioned way of matrimony.

"Now don't laugh at me—but be merciful; and that I may tempt you to be so, I will fully unfold to you how I was led (somewhat more suddenly, indeed, than I anticipated,) to bring my fate to a crisis; and if you, or any other man, holding the affections of such a girl in your power, could have done otherwise than I did, why then brand me for a fool; or

yourself for what, in that case, I think you would deserve to be called. But to the point.

"I have told you that this teaching on the one part, and learning on the other, very naturally led to an attachment between the tutor and his pupil; but her extreme youth and my indifferent fortune made me pause before I ventured to solicit her affections; nay, I had even resolved, as a point of honour, to take myself out of her way, and do my best towards banishing her seductive image from my thoughts.

"In this state of mind, a few evenings since, I took a walk with her round the lawn and grounds; an exceedingly prudent proceeding you will say, under the laudable design I had just formed of forgetting her entirely. However, prudent or not, I could not forego her society till compelled to it; and so I took the walk which decided my destiny. I tried as long as possible to ward off every disposition to steal into her confidence, and read the state of her young unsuspecting heart, which a man the most honourably inclined could scarcely, perhaps, under such circumstances, have totally resisted; and by dint of amusing and interesting her by repeated passages of poetry I, for a time, succeeded. But it was a hard trial, when, unconsciously turning to see how she was affected by any sweet or tender thought which my quotations produced, I perceived the loveliest eyes in the world glistening with tears, and fixed upon me with an affection that penetrated to my soul. It seemed to my imagination as if it asked my pity and returning love; and, scarcely knowing that I spoke, I gave utterance to the thoughts that passed within me. I remember little of what I said; but that I ended with

an impassioned exclamation. 'Who could grieve you?'

"Her soft trembling pressure upon my arm, her gentle, half articulated answer, 'Not you! you never could!' first awoke me to the recollection of what was passing; and the tender confidence with which she evidently reposed upon my integrity, impelled me to confirm it with an assurance as fervent as words prompted by genuine feeling could render it. I should instantly have followed up this promise of fidelity with a declaration of my love, but that we were interrupted by a summons from her aunt, and I could then utter no more.

"On the following day, when our party were dispersed abroad after their different amusements, and I was wandering about the house in search of my dear Kate, I was guided to her presence by hearing her peculiarly sweet voice singing in an adjoining room; the door of which being ajar, I stole so softly into the apartment that she heard me not, neither did she see me, for she was sitting with her back to the door and occupied with her work.

"And here I must observe upon the subject of her musical powers, (though, to be sure, you will call it the enthusiasm of a lover,) that I never perceived, in any of our best public performers, the pathos and power of touching the heart which Catherine possesses. In the careless notes she throws out, as in the gaiety of her heart she commonly does, when engaged with her pencil or her work, there is now and then, especially in her lower tones, such a richness, such an expression of deep and exquisite feeling, that long after they have ceased to meet the ear, they vibrate

upon the soul. It is seldom that you meet with singers who can do any thing without an accompaniment, and in fact you would generally be extremely sorry to hear them attempt it.

"But Catherine's simple, natural voice is ruined by the addition of the piano forte; and if it had not been that she has powers of intellect which disdain control, and *will* fight for themselves, the terrible quantity of teaching which has been inflicted upon her during the years she has passed at Mrs. Vernon's manufactory, must inevitably have turned her into one of those young ladies who faint at the idea of singing any thing in their own mother tongue, and who professedly perform no music but what is adapted to a language which they do not understand.

"'I am not proficient enough in Italian to feel the full force of what I am singing,' said Catherine to me the other day, 'and therefore I prefer English songs, for then I know what I am about; and if I am not pleased with the music I have still a chance left of being pleased with the words; and by liking and giving expression to a beautiful sentiment, one sometimes contrives to pass off very indifferent music, and make people like it, they don't know why.'

"And sure enough she does make people like her simple unstudied performances, they don't know why; for I am persuaded that no one could put into intelligible language the impression she makes upon the heart. She sits and sings the old Scotch ballads (for they are mostly her favourites,) and I am chained to her side with an enthusiasm of rapture which not unfrequently sends the tears to my eyes.

"On this morning she was singing to herself the one of all others which the most affects me; it was

"Auld Robin Gray." There she sat, with her work in her hand, and her face bent over it,—and such a face! It was Jeanie herself telling her own story, and I stood entranced to listen to it. I found myself so insensibly stealing towards her, that before she had concluded her little pathetic narrative, I was close behind her chair.

"But I interrupted her not till she had finished it, not until, in tones that made me almost ready to weep, she wound up the whole with—

'I'll do my best a gude wife to be,
For auld Robin Gray is very kind to me.'

Then, overpowered with feeling, I bent my head upon her shoulder, and fondly whispered her name. She started from me with momentary surprise; but the smile of delight which quickly pervaded her speaking features, emboldened me to believe that though an unexpected, I was not an unwelcome visitor. Oh, how often, how very often, since my acquaintance with this captivating girl, have I wondered at the baseness of that man's heart, who, for the mere gratification of his own despicable vanity, can trifle with the affections of an unsuspecting woman. The professed coquette, who may with very little penetration be known as soon as seen, is indisputably the lawful sport of our sex; but the woman possessed of deep and genuine feeling, ardent and devoted, willing to sacrifice all to follow the beloved of her heart, as by far the greater proportion of the sex who are attached will commonly do,—to jest and be amused, and take, as a mere tribute to self-love, all this devotion of the noblest feelings of the soul;

to be capable of this, forms, in my estimation, a species of criminal, compared with which I hold the man who robs, and even murders upon the high-way, to be respectable: for the loss of money is nothing, and the death of the body is little, when balanced with that living death, that daily pining of heart and soul, that wearing away of spirits and of mind, with which the victim of disappointed affection mourns over the too easy credulity with which she yielded herself up to the fond dreams of hope and confidence. With these sentiments,—and I make no boast of possessing them, since I consider them as essential to the character of every one who desires to be thought a man of honour, as bravery, or integrity, or any other quality, usually deemed necessary to support such pretensions;—but with these principles I could no longer defer a declaration which I felt assured would not be unfavourably received.

"I cannot, my dear F—, without appearing too much of a coxcomb, relate to you all that followed. Let me briefly say, that I never did, I never can know a moment equal, in purity of delight, to that in which this attractive child of nature, having in vain attempted to reply to my impassioned intreaties that she would tell me how far I might presume to believe upon a return of her affection, at last, as if unknowing what struggle delicacy ought to make with attachment, clasped both her hands upon my arm; and hiding her face upon them,—'I don't know what I ought to say,' she ejaculated,—'oh—if you should think ill of me!'

"'Ill of *you*, my dearest,—what should make you have such a thought?' and I tried to raise her drooping head.

" don't know,' she replied, again concealing her agitated face; 'I believe I should,—oh what should I do?' and she burst into tears.

"I clasped her to my heart. 'What should you do, my own Catherine,' I said, inexpressibly affected with her emotion so natural, so modest—'what should you do, dear love, but follow the dictates of nature! and, if your heart is not against him, requite with an accepting smile the man whose most devoted attachment is all your own?'

"She raised to mine those eloquent eyes, which wanted neither speech nor language; and again I repeat, that it was the moment of my life when I experienced the most unalloyed portion of happiness I had ever yet known. But, long ere you arrive at this conclusion, I expect you will have laid aside this voluminous epistle with a yawn, so I will add nothing more to it than my farewell."

St. Aubyn had done some injustice to Lady Vincent, in supposing that her ignorance of human nature influenced her apparent indifference to the evident and increasing attachment which existed between him and her niece. On the contrary, it might be traced to her transcendant skill in the motives which prompt people in their general conduct, that she remained so long passive respecting an affair, which, if she regarded the prosperity and advancement of Catherine in wedlock, she certainly might be forgiven for disapproving.

But she had always considered Catherine only in one point of view; and that was with reference to herself, and the great probability, if she remained unmarried, of her being eventually troublesome to her; and as all measures for disposing of her brother in

marriage had failed, she next turned her thoughts upon the eligibility of establishing her niece. She soon perceived that Mr. St. Aubyn was a candidate for her favour; and, in determining to let matters proceed till the high spirit of Catherine promised an assurance that all interference, as far as it respected *her*, would be useless, she took, as she conceived, the most probable measures for bringing the matter about. Her own opinion of her niece had never been a very favourable one; perhaps from her having indulged a habit of beholding her with that jaundiced eye, with which persons, who may at some time or other be dependent, are apt to be regarded by their more fortunate relations. Be that as it may, she considered, upon the most mature reflection, that St. Aubyn offered quite as good a match as Catherine had any pretensions to expect; and thus she tacitly encouraged his attentions, till she had reason to believe they had succeeded in engaging so deeply the affection of Catherine, as to render nugatory the counsels and reproof which, to justify her own conduct to Mr. Dorrington, she thought it would be proper for her in the present stage of the matter to propose.

Catherine, as she expected, stoutly asserted a determination to be faithful to her lover, and nothing now remained but for Lady Vincent to transmit to her brother an account of the matter, interspersed with the most solemn assurances of her having interposed her authority to prevent its proceeding any further, as soon as she was satisfied that it actually existed.

The consequence of this letter was the speedy arrival of Mr. Dorrington, to carry off his daughter in

great disgrace to his country-seat, (for understanding the vicinity of Mrs. Vernon's school to the usual residence of her admirer, he abandoned his intention of sending her there any more;) and in this abode, owing partly to the imprudence of youth, acting upon a mind capable of all that was good, but undisciplined by education, and partly to the injudicious severity with which she had been treated by her father, Catherine indulged her enthusiastic attachment, by receiving epistles from St. Aubyn; and finally yielding to his entreaties for a clandestine marriage, which, in the ardour of his affection, and deep commiseration for the distress he had brought upon her, he too inconsiderately urged, this thoughtless girl irretrievably settled the case, by eloping with him to Scotland, and there, in her seventeenth year, becoming his wife.

CHAPTER III.

To "prove all things," in order that we may "hold fast that which is good," is a divine command; and we commonly *do* prove them, but not as the Apostle enjoins; not with that quiet waiting upon Providence for the issue of events; not with that firm reliance upon his Divine word, which tries by it, as the only test of truth, every doubtful circumstance of life; but after the manner of self-willed and confident creatures, impelled by passion, we rush upon conclusions which, after they have been purchased with bit-

terness of heart, are found to be as false as they too commonly are fatal.

The period preceding Catherine's marriage with St. Aubyn not having been devoted to the purpose of trying the measures that were proposed to her by that Divine test of truth of which we have spoken, it was not extraordinary that she did not immediately discover that they were not of the kind which she ought "to hold fast."

It was not till after she had been a wife something more than a twelvemonth, that her mind was first visited with a doubt, whether the step she had taken was a right one. And to this mental debate she was guided by no diminution in her attachment to St. Aubyn; for that was as fervent, and, if possible, still more so than ever: nor was it that Lady Vincent had totally cast her off—neither was it because her father, who, in the first instance, had vowed never to acknowledge her again as his daughter, had died lately in so sudden a manner, that, had he designed it, he had no time to think of Catherine, or revoke a will in which he left her but a bare maintenance. The loss of her father affected her deeply, and the more so, as he died in displeasure with her; but this, nor any other event, would have made her hesitate in believing that the wife of St. Aubyn had a lot of unparalleled blessedness, had not circumstances she had little foreseen called into exercise a passion which none that love are wholly exempted from; and which, when awakened in the hearts of those who love as this impassioned creature loved, may be marked as the mournful, the infallible signal of happiness departing for ever.

To tell the dawn and progress of this fatal delu-

sion, for a delusion only it was, which poisoned the peace and almost broke the heart of its victim, we must again introduce to our readers Miss Augusta Belmont, a personage little worthy indeed of the prominent part she played in Catherine's history.

As St. Aubyn wished her to have some companion in her bridal expedition, that Augusta should be the person became a matter of course, she being extremely ready to participate in such an adventure, and Catherine supposing herself extremely happy in having her society. But it may easily be believed that her regard for Miss Belmont (however mistaken by herself for something very magnanimous,) was nothing more than the habit of gossipping, which attracts very young women to one another, and which, for want of some other name, they call friendship. Augusta was very soon recalled by her guardians (for she had lost her parents) from this excursion; but as it was discovered that the union Catherine had made, though not prudent, was still respectable, and Miss Belmont pretended not to be able to live without her society, (which, as it afforded her that of the officers of St. Aubyn's regiment, might be true enough,) she was permitted to accept the frequent invitations of her friend; and she became, with very little intermission, Catherine's constant guest, St. Aubyn wishing her to have some female friend generally residing with her.

Augusta's flirtation with Captain Harvey had ended in nothing, and had been succeeded by some half dozen adventures of a similar kind. She was, in fact, at seventeen years of age, the most finished coquette that ever came out of the hands of a governess; and but that she was good humoured, or ra-

ther, more properly speaking, satisfied with herself, she would have been perfectly insupportable. As it was, Catherine found, with improving observation, and maturer faculties, that it was impossible for her to regard her with any sentiments of respect; and that she really was too much below herself, both in intellect and principle, to be a worthy or proper companion for her. She imparted this opinion to St. Aubyn, who, not possessing altogether so much shrewd penetration into character as Catherine, was naturally a much more lenient judge of human nature than she was, and who therefore considered her as being rather too severe in her judgment of Augusta. "I am persuaded," he said "that there is really no harm in her. She is thoughtless and volatile, and, as a very pretty girl, fond of admiration—perhaps ridiculously so; but I consider her to be attached to you, Catherine, and, upon the whole, I think you are not quite so kind in your sentiments of her as she deserves." Catherine upon this rather more vehemently repeated her sentiments, and St. Aubyn more warmly, and with greater interest in Augusta, replied to them. On any other subject a hint from him would have sufficed to direct her opinions and conduct in the line he suggested. But feeling, as she could not but do, upon this point, that he was wrong in his judgment, she found it impossible to control the indignation with which she heard Augusta defended. Such, indeed, was the extravagance of her attachment, that it would have been difficult for her to have felt quite at ease while St. Aubyn was speaking very much in praise of any woman whatever. It was not, therefore, to be wondered at that she resented his so strongly advocating the cause

of one, whom she had some reason to believe unworthy of the pains he took in her behalf—she unfortunately lost all possession of herself. Instead of calmly pointing out to him wherein she imagined Augusta to be faulty—which, had she done, he would have perceived as clearly as herself; for his leniency in judging others proceeded not altogether so much from a deficiency of penetration as from a gentleness and suavity of disposition, that prompted him to see every thing through the pleasantest medium—she too much exaggerated her errors; and, like all angry persons, by the intemperance of her passion, she served rather than prejudiced the cause of her opponent, in whom, as St. Aubyn told her, whatever faults there were, there could exist nothing to excuse such extravagant expressions of resentment as she made use of. But besides that Catherine was yet too young to have any philosophy in her views of conduct, she had been nursed in error, and perfectly sacrificed by the course of her education. No principles had been instilled into her, but such as were grounded upon fashionable opinion. It is true she was not permitted at Mrs. Vernon's seminary to put herself out of temper with impunity, or to express herself in a violent or imperious manner; for nothing, Mrs. Vernon assured her pupils, was so unworthy of a high born accomplished gentlewoman, whose manners should be the example of all that was dignified and graceful. She also made a point of their appearing at Church every Sunday; each of them with a prayer book in their hands; and she had been known to be angry with a girl who never could learn to follow the Minister, but was always puzzled every time he turned over a leaf. "Church," she

would say, "was of all places that in which her young people should be the most circumspect in their conduct; for there they were particularly liable to remark. There they were observed by persons who, probably not having at any other time an opportunity of looking at fashionable people, were then particularly keen in watching and shaping their own behaviour upon that of their superiors."

It was by this sort of discipline that the heart and affections of a being, whose every nerve "turned at the touch of joy or woe, and turning trembled too," were fortified against the contingencies of life; and when her husband, displeased with her conduct on the occasion we have spoken of, left her so angrily as to cause her extreme misery, she had, upon Mrs. Vernon's plan, no other inducement to prompt her to better behaviour for the future, than a consideration that by not adopting it she would run the hazard of becoming so extremely vulgar and ungenteel as perhaps to disgust St Aubyn, and cause him to regret having married so unpolished a wife. And could a motive so poor as this suffice to chain up emotions which, like an overwhelming torrent, bore down in their course every dictate of her better reason! Could it point to any recompense for struggle, difficulty, and self denial? Was a labour so intense as that she must have endured in soothing herself into composure, and subduing her passion, was it requited by a consciousness that she was only doing what was becoming, and thereby sustaining the character of an elegant gentlewoman? Alas!—she quickly found that no medicine for her suffering spirit had been given her in the doctrines of Mrs. Vernon. She indulged her emotions till they exhausted

themselves, and till she had perfectly astonished St. Aubyn by such an exhibition of temper, for such a trifling cause. He knew not indeed how far imagination operated to make poor Catherine apparently so absurd and unjust: for he knew not the latent feeling of jealousy which, before he advocated Augusta's cause, rendered her suspicious of his admiring her rather more than she liked, and which made her still more anxious to discover what might be his real opinion of her.

But had she not been blinded by this destructive passion, she might have read at a glance every thought he entertained respecting her. She might have traced it in every word he addressed to Augusta. She might have been well assured that had he felt a particle of real attachment for her, his manner would have been guarded and constrained, and tinctured with embarrassment; at all events in the presence of his wife; and that nothing like the laughing familiarity, (which in fact Augusta, by her own behaviour, made it impossible for any man who conversed with her not to assume,) could have existed.

Once having indulged such a surmise, this unfortunate girl discovered a meaning in his every look, his every smile, when directed to Augusta. She had often been dissatisfied, before she mentioned her to St. Aubyn in the manner we have related, at their frequent laughter and frolics; for which in point of fact St. Aubyn had no kind of inclination, for he was rather of a pensive mind, but in which she always by some means or other contrived to engage him, when no other gentleman was at hand to occupy her attention. After the above conversation with Catherine, his manner in this particular changed; and

whenever they were alone, which indeed was not often, he pleaded a head-ache, and instead of the gaiety in which he used to indulge with Augusta, they both became quiet, and each apparently occupied with some pursuit independent of the other. But this was a species of behaviour which was far from dissipating the doubts of Catherine. She now discovered that nothing could be more consonant with an attachment than this sort of restraint, and she became much more miserable than she was before.

Wholly unskilled in concealing her sentiments, Augusta soon discovered them, and then it was that the life of Catherine was totally overloaded with wretchedness. To those who are blessed with peaceful happy tempers, whose feelings are disciplined, and whose affections are duly regulated, it would be difficult to convey any idea of the power which the weakest person that exists obtains over the most highly gifted mind, when that mind is subjugated to the dominion of jealousy. The quotation has been so hackneyed that one almost fancies it commonplace, but the victims of that passion fully understand its truth—they know by bitter experience how infallibly

> "Trifles light as air are to the jealous,
> Confirmation strong as proofs of holy writ."

Augusta was perfectly incapable of friendship, and had no otherwise attached herself to Catherine than as her confidante and companion in her adventures. Since the marriage of the former she had, as we have remarked, affected a fondness for her society which imposed upon St. Aubyn an idea of her affection for his wife, but of which Catherine was not likely to be

the dupe. But the natural disposition of Catherine to be kind to those who were kind to her, would still have attached her to Augusta as long as the latter treated her with the careless good-humour which is generally all that girls expect from one another, and had confined her disposition for flirting and foolery to such persons as were at liberty to sympathise with it. But when she directed her blandishments against St. Aubyn, it was another affair; and after discovering that she never had approved of her, that she was an unfit companion for her, and that it was time to drop her acquaintance, Catherine rapidly proceeded to a thorough and complete detestation of her.

No one can patiently endure to be hated, and submit to indications of contempt, without practising some species of resentment in return; and if this sort of silent but inveterate hostility happens to be maintained between an irritable and an apathetic temper, it is quite incredible the advantage which the latter obtains, and the indescribable torture which, from its very calmness, it has the power to inflict upon the other.

Augusta had no real feeling, no passion whatever, but that of vanity. She might have been talked to for ever upon subjects of imagination, without exciting in her any thing like an emotion. Her bosom friend might have wrought herself up into a state of the most pitiable and harrowing agitation, without drawing from her any thing but a stare of surprise; or a "dear me!—don't make yourself so unhappy."

This was the creature in whose power Catherine placed her peace, by suffering her to perceive how easily she could disturb it; and it was a power which was exercised as might have been expected, and as

power invariably is exercised by persons of narrow minds, greedy of an opportunity of humiliating those who, but for some unhappy circumstances, would be in a condition to smile with disdain at the paltry attacks of their low malice.

She certainly had not only never loved Catherine, but she had nourished against her the dislike which a vain, cold-hearted woman might be supposed to entertain against one of her own sex, who had been more distinguished, and (as she would think in getting married) much more fortunate than herself.

The species of attention too, that Mrs. St. Aubyn received from her husband and his friends, was so totally different, and of so much more elevated a character than what was offered to Miss Belmont, that although she affected to despise intellectual attractions, she could not but envy the powers by which Catherine often kept by her side some admired favourite of her own, at whom her smiles and her nonsense had been directed in vain. But alas! what was the accomplishment that Catherine possessed which she would not willingly have resigned for the self-control, the patience, the fortitude, the humility, which, at this unhappy period, often made her very servants greater objects of respect to her than she was to herself.

In this state of mutual antipathy towards each other, it was not likely that Augusta and Catherine should long continue without some change of circumstances. But the former had the art of so completely disguising her sentiments, and veiled her abhorrence of the latter under such a thick veil of duplicity, that to a mere observer of appearances, Catherine must have passed for the most capricious and

ill-tempered of women to have harboured any ill-will towards her. Augusta's assumed fondness seemed to increase with Catherine's distaste to her; and nothing short of receiving from her an absolute declaration of hatred would have induced her to quit the house. She had designs upon her happiness of which Catherine did not believe her base enough to be capable; for she could not form any conception of the hardness of heart which distinguishes a coquette. She had been unfortunate enough to betray that she was jealous of her, and thus she had given her food for the gratification of every vile propensity of her nature. If it had been only from the love of mischievous fun, and she had been actuated by no sinister motives, Augusta would not have refrained from sporting with the feelings of her unhappy friend, and drawing amusement from the absurdities she caused her to commit. She delighted to talk to her of her husband, whom she always familiarly denominated "St. Aubyn," and in the most careless manner she would drop a few words relative to him, which it would have extremely puzzled her, if required, to affix any meaning to; but which, in the apprehension of Catherine, were an intelligible avowal of their mutual attachment.

Whenever she purchased any article of dress or personal ornament, which was of pretty frequent occurrence, she always hinted that she had been guided by his particular taste. "I have given such a gown to my maid," she would reply, if Catherine remarked the absence of it, "for St. Aubyn told me the other day he could not bear to see me in it, and so I made him go with me to choose this. St. Aubyn is uncommonly altered of late," she would

times remark, "don't you think, Catherine, he is grown very grave?"

An inquiry which Catherine generally answered with a contemptuous smile, which Augusta did not of course chuse to understand, but proceeded to torment her, till, in terror of breaking out into open accusation, and thus acknowledging her weakness, the distracted creature broke from her presence.

From her extreme youth, and the hitherto trifling trials of her life, Catherine knew nothing, till they were called into exercise, of the force of her own passions, or the intense sorrow which the indulgence of them was calculated to promote. All, with her, had hitherto been halcyon days, except when her father was cross; and then she found little difficulty in forgetting the trouble he occasioned her, so pliantly did her disposition bend to every pleasure which she could either find or make. A song, a plant, a flower, a mere walk in the open air, to look at the glorious smiling sun, and hear the cheerful birds, had then sufficed to chase away the heaviest grief; but for such a grief as this—this eating canker of the soul—she knew of nothing.

"Oh, nothing! nothing can ever make me happy again!" she exclaimed, one evening after she had broken from the presence of the perfidious Augusta, who, in the manner of which we have just spoken, had been insidiously endeavouring to poison her mind, by a string of insinuations respecting St. Aubyn's interest in her,—"Nothing can ever make me happy again!" and sobbing with convulsive violence, she cast herself upon her bed, and there remained until this paroxysm of anguish had exhausted itself.

With a calmer frame returned a calmer spirit, and

reason, not wholly subdued, suggested the vagueness —the total nothingness of all that Augusta had said —together with the impossibility, if she were any thing less than an idiot, of her venturing to hint at an attachment between herself and St. Aubyn, or to approach the subject in conversation with his wife, if such a thing really existed.

Still she could not feel tranquil—the recollection of the warm manner in which St. Aubyn had defended Augusta, was too present to her imagination.

"But I cannot live under this load of wretchedness!" she continued, breaking into fresh tears, as the recollection of what he had then said occurred to her mind. In her distempered fancy he appeared not as he really was, the man of calm and benevolent feeling, speaking in the cause of one whom he considered to be judged with too much severity. This was not the being she saw, but a man blinded by passion, by the strongest passion, to errors which none but a person so misled, could, as she conceived, contemplate without contempt.

Thus driven backwards and forwards upon the waves of ungoverned feeling, she remained for some hours; at length she heard St. Aubyn (who had been dining out) return home, and walk into a room below, which was more particularly denominated his own.

No sooner did this signal of his arrival greet her ear, than she started up to prosecute an intention which had been for a long time vibrating in her mind; but which nothing but the extremity of wretchedness could have prompted her to pursue.

It was to lay before St. Aubyn the state of her unhappy mind. Trembling and pale, as if she had

risen from her tomb—her eyes, generally so soft and lovely, now heavy and weighed down with tears—her countenance, in its usual expression, beaming with happiness and mirth, now quivering with emotions that seemed to be nothing less than agonising—she stood at the door, which St. Aubyn, on hearing her approach, opened for her reception.

"My dear Catherine!" he exclaimed, in a voice of the utmost alarm, which the extraordinary appearance she made was calculated enough to inspire, "for God's sake, what is the matter?" and gently drawing her into the apartment, he would have constrained her to sit down, but she would not.

She stood, endeavouring to collect all her strength of mind and power of speech, and, believing that she had succeeded, she spoke, or rather she tried to speak. "It is now more than a year, St. Aubyn," she said, since you called me your wife, and my love for you—oh! in what terms can I tell it!—and at the mere thought of the intensity of affection she was nourishing for him, who might perhaps feel none for her, all language failed, and she cast herself upon his bosom, to hide the burst of anguish with which this terrible idea recurred to her fancy.

"What *can* this mean? what *can* possess you, my dearest Kate? If you love me, speak and tell me!" St. Aubyn incessantly repeated, in a state of agitation scarcely inferior to her's, for wholly unsuspicious of the phantom she had raised to torment herself, he knew not to what other cause than that of temporary derangement to attribute her strange and alarming conduct.

The terror with which he gazed upon her as he endeavoured to tranquillise her, imparted to her an

idea of the horrible suspicions with which she was inspiring him, and she struggled for a calmer demeanour.

"You think me mad, St. Aubyn," she said; "alas! I am little better! but you can restore me to reason. Only tell me this—and as you hope for mercy at the hand of heaven, tell me the truth." She hesitated—she scarcely knew in what language to shape the inquiry which her better judgment suggested to her it was so improper, so unworthy of her to make. But, driven to the borders of desperation, and vehemently urged by St. Aubyn to speak further, she saw no retreat—so, again hiding her blushing face upon his bosom, she murmured out the name only of Augusta Belmont.

"Augusta!"—he repeated—"and what of her? You surely"—and he half drew back to look at her, as if to read in her countenance the thoughts that were passing within her mind, as a faint surmise of what might possibly be their nature, suddenly crossed him. But immediately rejecting it as too absurd to be dwelt upon for an instant—"Oh, no—no, no," he continued, "you could not think so meanly of me—you have too much confidence in me."

"God bless, you, St Aubyn, for those words—my own dear St Aubyn," she said, bursting into tears of joy as the irresistible force of truth broke out, not so much in the matter as in the manner with which he replied to her. "You do not love her—no, no, you do not—I know you do not." "And is it possible, my dear ridiculous girl," said he with a smile, which however struggled with a tear, "is it possible that you can have suffered such a chimera as this to bring you into a state of real unhappiness? My poor

Kate," he continued, looking upon her with a tenderness as touching as it was genuine, "what a heart are you taking into the trials of life! Yet perhaps," he said, after a moment's thought, "these self created evils are of all others the most difficult to be supported."

"Let me but be assured of your attachment," she replied; be that but mine, and there is no evil, no trial for me."

"Ah, my dear Kate, there are evils, though, and trials too, I doubt, in store for you," he said with a sigh.

"They can only affect me, as affecting you," she replied; "but you look serious, St. Aubyn—something disturbs you—tell me what it is?"

"It is nothing of very recent occurrence," he replied. "It has long been a conviction upon my mind that we must alter our plan of life; and, in fact, I now only wait for your consent to effect my exchange into a less expensive regiment; in which, being unknown, we can begin a plan of retrenchment without any embarrassment. But to involve you in privations of any kind"—he was proceeding, but Catherine interrupted his regret with the tenderest caresses.

She told him truly, that a state of absolute poverty, shared with him, was to her a state of bliss. And seeing in their change of circumstances a certainty of wholly escaping Augusta, she traced in it nothing but delight; and became more eager than himself for the completion of it.

CHAPTER IV.

It was speedily accomplished, and they exchanged their gay quarters for the barracks in the large provincial town of C——.

As Catherine had anticipated, their altered fortunes produced an alteration in Augusta's friendship, which from long and frequent visits, now rapidly descended into few and short epistles, and at last into a cessation of all correspondence. Thus having, as she hoped, entirely lost sight of her, Catherine soon forgot there was such a being in existence, and resumed the captivating ease and gaiety of temper and manner, which in her was as natural as it was charming, and which still rendered her as attractive to her husband as in the first period of their marriage.

For six years they continued, with few interruptions, to taste a degree of felicity not often allotted to the inhabitants of this fleeting scene. True, they had their trials, and Catherine more particularly her's; though, in the confidence of her young and energetic spirit, she had imagined none beyond the loss of her husband's love. But then she knew not the boundless anxiety, the incessant hopes and fears, which in the character of a mother were to be her portion. She had the misfortune to lose three of her children; and her eldest boy was so delicate in health as to keep her in continual dread of his following them. Still

she was happy, for St. Aubyn loved her; and, nothing occurring to excite the violence of her passions, though much in her ardent affection for her children to produce many endearing qualities, he entirely devoted himself to her, and to those domestic, quiet pleasures, for which his elegant mind and gentle temper so peculiarly qualified him. Most of their evenings were spent only in each other's society; when, in the alternate amusements of reading and music, time passed on by them on golden wings. He often made her happy in speaking of the enjoyment he derived from her conversation and acquirements; and, thus continually stimulated by the desire of deserving his praise, she took incessant pains to improve the accompliments she possessed, and to store her intelligent mind with information. She had always a love for literature; and St. Aubyn, being a liberal-minded man, valued her the more for every advantage her reading gave her. But, though he was thus generous, it was not to be supposed that others would prove so; especially in a provincial town, where knowledge is less diffused, and where, to bestow the appellation of a literary lady, is pretty much the same in its tendency as setting up the cry of a mad dog; every body is terribly afraid to meet it singly, but uncommonly courageous in joining the mob in hooting and pelting it.

Her intellectual advantages, therefore, did not render her popular, but they preserved her the love and respect of her husband; and she was rather too unguarded in manifesting how perfectly she despised the sentiments of every one else. Upon this point St. Aubyn conceived her to blame, and hence it was

that their only differences occurred; she condemning as pusillanimous his terror of making enemies; and he, though often compelled to smile at the cleverness and spirit of her remarks, still on the whole reproving as satirical, and calculated to procure for her the character of ill-natured, her unguarded habit of detailing her opinion of things and persons.

In defiance, however, of all her faults, and sometimes he would say he believed almost *for* them, he loved her very fervently. Her variation of mind kept him perpetually alive, and, as we have just said, nothing occurring to rouse the violence of her passions, they were happy.

Alas, they were! But happiness had continued its season, and the vicissitudes of fate were again about to visit them; and again they came in the only form that was likely to be fatal, for they came in the form of that being, who seemed to Catherine's undisciplined mind to be commissioned as an evil spirit, to cross her path and make it desolate.

It was with feelings of little less than horror that, about this time, she heard that one of the officers of St. Aubyn's regiment, and a very intimate companion of his, was going to be married to a Miss Belmont, whom he had encountered at Cheltenham. She buoyed herself up with every possible suggestion of its being some other Miss Belmont than the one she knew; though the regular circuit of watering places Augusta was in the habit of making, rendered it but too probable that she was the person.

The fact was soon confirmed to her by St. Aubyn himself; who, in some little confusion at mentioning again a name, which as if by mutual consent had long been a stranger to the lips of both of them, informed

her that it really was Augusta whom Captain Elliot intended very shortly to marry.

It seemed almost impossible that the tranquillity of six years could have been so instantaneously disturbed, as it was in the mind of Catherine by this intelligence. It was not that she did not rely upon St. Aubyn's constancy, for she soothed, or rather tried to soothe away the fears, which in the glance of an instant recalled her past sufferings, and the possibility of a repetition of them, by dwelling upon the fond, the faithful assurances he had formerly given her of his indifference to Augusta—assurances which his conduct as a husband had so truly so sweetly justified. But still the terror of seeing him, as she feared she should, subject every day of his life to the allurements of a woman, who lived only upon the tributes of admiration she extorted from every man who came in her way: to think of this was to give herself up to misery! But she would not think of it! "No, I will not," she said, starting up from a reverie, in which she had been revelling in wretchedness for more than two hours; "Augusta must be changed in the course of six years; she cannot be the same frivolous being now that she was then—and a wife too!—oh no! I am to blame to judge her so hastily—I will struggle for better thoughts—I *will* not be thus foolish." A resolution which prompted her to school her mind, by the best efforts of which she was capable, into a more reasonable frame.

In some degree they succeeded, and by the time Augusta arrived, she had formed a determination to meet her, at least with civility, and with a behaviour which should indicate that time had enabled her to bury in oblivion whatever she had formerly disliked

in her conduct. Imagining that Mrs. Elliot on her part would be equally disposed to forget it, Catherine was tolerably tranquil when she accompanied her husband to pay her the compliment of a morning call, as soon as she was established in the place.

She found her just the same wild, thoughtless creature she had ever known her; improved in beauty, which was certainly of the most striking kind, but not a jot more sedate than when she was her guest at seventeen. She was, or appeared to Catherine, even more ridiculous in her manners; and it was not difficult to perceive, before she had been ten minutes in her company, that if her former familiarity with St. Aubyn was not renewed, it would be owing to his disinclination to it, and not hers.

Captain Elliot was a good humoured, but weak man; who was satisfied to call a handsome, fashionable young woman his wife, without being at all precise, or it might be said even correct, in his notions of what was becoming in female conduct.

They returned home from their visit to the new married pair in not a very communicative mood. Catherine really desired to avoid exciting any suspicion in St. Aubyn's mind of her revived dislike to Augusta; and he had kept the most guarded silence in respect to the past, ever since her name had been again introduced to his notice.

As Catherine was gifted with that faculty for observation which is always bent upon discovering more than appears (a pernicious habit, in a world wherein so many things contribute to misapprehension,) she fancied that this strict reserve on his part resulted from some feelings (of what nature she could not to herself define, but) calculated to give pain, because

he withheld them from her. The simple fact of his not reverting to her past suspicions of Augusta, because he hoped she had lived to see their absurdity, never occurred to her. When there are two ways of viewing a subject, a mind under the dominion of jealousy instinctively applies itself to work upon that which is gloomy.

The arrival of a bride is generally the signal of much gaiety, and a great deal of visiting followed the appearance of Mrs. Elliot. As she was already disposed of in marriage, and did not interfere with the views of the young women, and was apparently too thoughtless and good-natured to criticise the dress and manners of the old ones, she was a general favourite with her own sex; whilst her beauty and folly ensured her, naturally enough, a distinguished place in the good opinion of the other. She became the theme of every tongue, which was unanimous in sounding her praises.

Had Catherine possessed a particle of policy, she would on every account have enlisted herself on the side of her admirers; but, independently of the scorn with which she fancied she read the little paltry motives that actuated many to be particularly assiduous in magnifying before her Mrs. Elliot's good-humour, her non-assumption of superiority, her total freedom from satire, and every other quality that was opposite to those which the enemies of Catherine supposed her to possess, it was as impossible for the latter to disguise her feelings, as it would have been wholly to destroy them. She totally disapproved of Mrs. Elliot, and certainly not without reason, though there were innumerable reasons why she should not have promulged her sentiments upon this point.

But prudence and self-command not being amongst the qualities which spontaneously spring up and flourish in the human mind, they had not attained much growth in that of Catherine, while she was taking her chance under the tuition of Miss Mathews; and not hearing any thing in their praise from the lips of Mrs. Vernon, except that they might help to make her genteel, it is not much to be wondered at that she knew not how to appreciate or exercise them.

CHAPTER V.

There are many very excellent persons, round whom, nature, in the constitution of their mental frame, has thrown such a shield of defence from the attacks of sensibility, that a human being made wretched from the indulgence of mere imaginary sorrows, is to them a spectacle only fit to be exhibited within the walls of Bedlam.

And far be it from me to dispute this opinion, which may, perhaps, be not far from being a right one. I would only remark, that to such persons, I fear this portion of Catherine's story will be in a great degree revolting, since I have now to exhibit her under these particular circumstances.

Truth compels me to say, that neither the most affectionate behaviour towards herself, nor the most guarded conduct to Augusta on the part of St. Aubyn, nor the frequent endeavours she herself made to repel every suspicious thought, could restore to

Catherine that untroubled peace of mind, and entire confidence in her husband's love which had rendered her residence at C—— hitherto so delightful and so happy.

Augusta was that heartless, inhuman being, who, even as a wife, had no triumph so great as that of practising upon the vanity (it would be unworthy to say the hearts) of men. St. Aubyn was still her mark; and, though he forbore to offer her the pointed attentions she endeavoured to excite, she put it almost out of his power to address her with the merely polite civility he was desirous of extending towards her, by the footing of familiarity on which she seemed determined to receive him.

The most steadily governed mind would certainly sometimes have been shaken, by the attempts she levelled against its peace; how much more, then, was that of the unfortunate Catherine disturbed!

The gaiety of her disposition—the sweetness of her temper, which, though from the vivacity of her undisciplined feelings subject to hasty ebullitions of anger at untoward circumstances, had still been of that affectionate kind, which rendered her to St. Aubyn the most attractive and engaging of women—all was fading away—and, insensibly to herself, she was daily yielding to an irritability of mind which betrayed itself at first in such trifles as St. Aubyn considered it unworthy to notice; but which gradually strengthened into a sort of conduct, which it was impossible for him to pass over without comment.

Wishing as much as possible to avoid the presence of Augusta, whom she detested with a hatred which no principles within her taught her the sin of indulging, Catherine had evaded as often as she could, un-

der a plea of indisposition, the frequent invitations she and her husband received from the Elliots.

Whenever she went there, she invariably returned home miserable, and therefore her conduct in this respect was not, perhaps, wholly wrong. St. Aubyn, seeing the motive for it, acquiesced in her humour, though provoked to find her capable of being influenced by any thing which to him appeared so absurd.

However, he passed it off in silence, and, to spare her active fancy any exercise of its power to torment, he joined in her excuses when she chose to make any, and contentedly remained at home with her.

But when this had continued for a time, and he found himself furnishing an excellent joke to the whole mess, as a man who was tied to his wife's apron's string (a joke which Augusta had infinite joy in promoting,) he yielded to the power of ridicule: and, with more firmness than he had ever yet exhibited, he came one day to Catherine with an invitation from the Elliots for the evening, "which," said he, "it is my wish, Kate, that you accept."

She, as usual, declared her disinclination to do so.

"Then I must go without you," replied St. Aubyn carelessly.

"You *must!*" she repeated, "is there any absolute necessity for it."

"I don't know for necessity," said he, "but I shall choose to do it," and to avoid any further discussion of the matter he left the room.

If a thunderbolt had fallen at the feet of Catherine, she could not have been more stupified with astonishment. It was not altogether the being driven into the society of Augusta, though that was terrible

enough, which so much alarmed her: it was the sudden announcement of authority and rule on the part of St. Aubyn which struck dismay into her heart. She had hitherto indeed influenced him in the most absolute manner, or, as her enemies called it, governed him—but it had been with a sceptre of love. It had been by consulting his wishes; by making his home the scene of gaiety and talent; and being to him all that woman, in the bloom of youth, and beauty, and intellect, and impassioned affection, can be to a man of sense and taste.

"And this is all gone,—gone for ever!" she exclaimed; and darting, as she believed, upon the cause of St. Aubyn's determined resolution, "Oh, she has been talking to him—urging him to come! I see her—I see her—she is before me now!" she continued; and well recollecting the familiarity of manner with which Augusta accustomed herself to address those whom she wished to persuade to any measure (and they were invariably men, for women she openly professed never to trouble her head about,) she sat down to picture in her mind's eye the allurements which had prevailed upon St. Aubyn to be so determined upon accepting her invitation.

"And he thinks that I will patiently go and witness all this!" she said with an indignant smile, "but I never will—no, I never, never will!" and armed with this determination, she announced it to him at dinner—but not angrily, for she wished him not to think it the result of impulse, but of settled purpose.

She merely said, that she wished to be no restraint upon him; but that for herself, she disliked Mrs. Elliot, and she would always by choice avoid her society. St. Aubyn made no reply; and as soon as she

could, Catherine sought her chamber, there to indulge, not in the "luxury of woe,"—for in whatever department of misery that is to be found, it certainly does not exist in the precincts of jealousy—she retired to be as completely and entirely wretched as the fact of her husband's visiting her mortal enemy, and the great probability of his being deeply fascinated and charmed by the attractions of that enemy, could possibly render her.

So vividly did her imagination place before her the scene in which he was engaged, that more than once she started up with a sudden resolution of dressing herself and following him to the house of Augusta, and alleging to her, as indifferently as she could, that she had changed her mind, and felt desirous of joining the party; thus preventing by her presence the attentions which St. Aubyn, in her absence, might not be indisposed to render to his hostess.

She was sure that she should be less miserable there than at home, and she rung the bell for the maid to assist her toilette.

But by the time the summons was obeyed, the inconsistency and strange appearance of such a proceeding occurred to her, and she felt that she ought not to adopt it: and that, in fact, however she might attempt to disguise it, it would be nothing less than telling to Augusta all that was passing in her mind.

"You may go," said she, turning to the servant who had obeyed her summons, and stood waiting to know her pleasure.

"I tell you that you may go," she repeated angrily, as the girl, perceiving her pale and agitated coun-

tenance, and still more agitated manner, hesitated to quit her.

When, however, the command was so sternly repeated, she retired; and Catherine overwhelmed with a consciousness of terribly wrong conduct, burst into tears. She was naturally kind and considerate to her servants, and beloved by them all: for her disposition, though hasty, was of too elevated a kind to feel any pleasure in the exercise of power over her dependents, except to make them comfortable, by the easy manner in which she required their services.

But now, as the mistress of a family as well as a wife, she was rapidly losing ground in the esteem she had inspired; and but too conscious that this was the case, she could but mourn with increasing anguish the fatal cause which had led to this subversion of all that was right.

She sobbed as if her heart would break; and while thus torn to pieces with passion contending with remorse, a voice struck upon her ear which came from a room adjoining her own, the door of which was open.

It was a sweet, gentle voice softly repeating "*mamma!*"—It was the voice of Edmund her only child, which, breaking upon her ear in accents so mild at such a moment as this, gave a check to her emotion as powerful as it was unexpected.

She hastened towards him, believing that he called for her—but he was asleep, and in his slumbers had pronounced her name. He too seemed to be wrapt in his little visions; but they were apparently of a calmer, happier nature, than those which occupied the waking fancy of his poor mother; for as he slept he smiled, he murmured inarticulate sounds—

again he smiled—he even laughed, so gay and pleasant were the images that passed before his dreaming spirit.

Though the tears were wet upon her cheeks, though the throb of anguish still heaved her bosom, it was impossible for Catherine to withhold a sympathising smile as she gazed upon her sweet boy. She bent down and kissed his cheek; and, as if she had at last found a pillow of rest for her aching head, she laid it upon his bosom, and though she wept incessantly, it was with tears that now seemed to give her infinite relief.

Her grief gradually died away in heavy sighs. Images succeeded each other with less rapidity and distinctness; they became obscure and dull—till at length, exhausted and overpowered, she fell asleep by the side of her child.

In this situation she was discovered by St. Aubyn on his return home—painfully discovered! for had the most minute detail been given him of all she had endured in his absence, it would have less forcibly impressed him than what he beheld. He could trace it all: he could see indeed, in her pale and hollow cheek, strong vestiges of what had passed; and in his mind's eye he could well pourtray the despair of heart which had driven her to the couch of her child, as to the only asylum which her disordered imagination represented to be left for her, in her self-created sorrow.

"Oh! how worse than childish is this!" he could not forbear from exclaiming; for though affected by her uneasiness, it was not unnatural that an emotion of displeasure should prevail over compassion, when

he thought of the unreasonableness which prompted this indulgence of feeling.

Nevertheless he took her hand with the utmost tenderness, gently calling upon her to awake.

She was instantly roused at the sound of his voice, and fixed upon him her heavy eyes, with an expression so mournful, that, as if she had addressed to him the bitterest reproaches, he could not refrain from replying to it.

"You are unjust to me, Kate," he said; "you wrong me cruelly, and one day you will think so, if you do not now."

She sighed deeply, but attempted no answer, till, having struggled with the feelings which, as he spoke, almost impeded his words, he was going on to address her again.

Then rising, she laid her hand upon his arm: "If I do wrong you, St. Aubyn," she said, "I must beseech you to forgive me. I will try to believe that I am unjust, since you say that I am. But, whether I be so or not, I know that my heart is well nigh broken. Nay, do not look at me so impatiently," she continued, perceiving the irritation with which he listened to this, "but spare me at this moment any further discussion. Indeed I cannot bear it."

"I am sure that I cannot," he replied, breaking away from her in fear that he should say any thing to exasperate her, so totally was his indignation excited by the wretched manner in which she appeared to him to be frittering away her peace.

CHAPTER VI.

For a short time St. Aubyn refrained from accepting the invitations of the Elliots; but, on such occasions, a consciousness of his sacrificing what she believed to be his wishes, threw a cloud over the satisfaction which Catherine would otherwise have received from this circumstance; and she painfully felt, in her incapacity to be cheerful, that her society but ill requited him for losing that of the sprightly Augusta.

A weight the most oppressive seemed to have been thrown over the whole of her mental frame. She was totally incapable of any exertion. All that she did was to go quietly about the house, with very few words and no smiles, occasionally occupying herself as it were mechanically with a book, or her work, or any thing that served to pass away the time, which evidently was tedious to her beyond all endurance.

Believing it impossible that this strange alteration could result from the mere operation of fancy, St. Aubyn began to think that her health was affected, and that bodily disease in some measure contributed to produce it.

But she declared herself to be perfectly well, and vehemently protested against receiving any medical advice.

Provoked beyond all measure at her conduct, he then, for the first time in his life, asserted his authority as a husband in a manner not be disputed; and

that he might strike at once at what he conceived to be the root of her folly, he desired her, if she did not wish to make a total breach between them, to accept an invitation they at this time received, to meet a large party at Captain Elliot's. She literally dared not to disobey him, though her whole soul recoiled from what he desired of her. She even tried, under the dreadful thought of totally estranging him, to please and conciliate him as much as she could, by conceding the point willingly.

For several days before, she endeavoured to tranquillise her mind; yet, such was the power of her emotions, that when the carriage stopt at the door, and St. Aubyn offered his arm for her to descend, she told him he *must* allow her to change her mind —she did not feel well, she should be better at home.

She had been silent and dispirited the whole of the day, and during their ride she had more than once shed tears. St. Aubyn seemed at first inclined to yield to her caprice, and half closed the door without uttering a single word. But then flashed across her mind a recollection of the terrible wretchedness she had once before endured on being left at home on such an occasion, and as suddenly as she had formed her resolve she renounced it, and simply saying, "It is no matter, as I *am* come I will stay," she descended from the carriage, and accompanied her husband into the house.

Either her disordered fancy magnified her charms or never had she seen Augusta look so lovely. She was elegantly dressed; her countenance was all smiles, her manner all gaiety and good-humour. She was surrounded by a circle of admirers, from whom she broke away to greet her new guests. Ca-

therine's heart literally sickened at her approach, her hand almost recoiled from her touch, and scarcely could she refrain from repeating, in accents of scorn, the word "dear!" as, in accosting her, Augusta applied it to her name. But she laboured to control herself, and with as much composure as she could command, she paid her a few cold compliments, and retired to a distant chair. Here she was not molested by much notice, a circumstance which to Catherine was never mortifying; for in all the world there was only her husband, whose attention was of the slightest consequence to her. Alas! how dangerous it is to love too well! This state of existence is not calculated for it. We must, as much as possible, make our sentiments fit for every-day use. But those of poor Catherine were all like holiday suits, very fine to look at, and costing her dear enough! but many of them extremely unbecoming, and not in the least adapted for common occasions.

Augusta affecting to be surprised at her sitting apart, soon approached, ostensibly to shew her attention, but in fact only to evince her own triumph, in making Catherine feel that whilst she was neglected, Mrs. Elliot was little less than adored.

Her train of beaux of course followed her, but as Catherine appeared but little disposed for it, they did not extend to her a share of the conversation with which they had been amusing Augusta. Some kind of new game had been produced by one of them for her entertainment, something like drafts, and nothing would do but she must instruct St. Aubyn how it was to be played; prefixing an ironical request for Catherine's permission before she began to teach him. Her malice was so palpable, and really clumsy,

that it disarmed anger, and Catherine gave her a genuine smile as she replied, "That she was always happy in every fresh acquisition her husband made of knowledge."

St. Aubyn looked at her as she spoke, and she saw by the expression of his countenance that he had misinterpreted her smile, which really was not at that instant the indication of satire and ill-humour that he imagined it.

There had hitherto been some restraint in his manner towards Augusta, especially in the presence of his wife. Though meeting her advances to familiarity a great deal more than Catherine liked, he had certainly, even to her distempered observation, kept greatly within the bounds to which her behaviour would have authorised his extending his attention, had he been so inclined.

But now he seemed all at once to discard any *thing* of reserve, and to be determined that Catherine should no longer be miserable without a cause. He accepted with a ready smile Augusta's challenge to be his instructress, and they sat down to play at a table which was close by the chair on which Catherine was sitting. She was rather in their way, and she rose to accommodate them with more room, and she would have had resolution to walk to the other end of the apartment, but that Augusta, bent upon torturing her, detained her by placing her hand upon her arm, and drawing another chair for her, "You must stay," said she; "I shall have all the women in the room abusing me, and saying that I am flirting with your husband, unless you prevent slander by giving me your countenance,"

A feeling that was wholly unaccountable took pos-

session of Catherine as Augusta spoke, which fettered her tongue, and rivetted her to the spot. Without uttering a word she obeyed her suggestion, and resumed her seat. For more than an hour she silently sat by them, occasionally sighing deeply, for she was suffering beyond the power of language to describe.

Yet, wretched as she was, there seemed to be a fascination in her misery. She felt as if she could sooner have died than have quitted the spot. She tried once or twice to turn away her eyes, and fix her attention upon any thing else; the very effort to do so made her almost gasp, and instantly she gave over the exertion, and returned to indulge the impulse that chained every faculty of sense and thought, upon the contemplation of Augusta and St. Aubyn alone. Yet, strange to say, though she was in the extreme of torment, there was a kind of terrible satisfaction in believing that her suspicions of St. Aubyn were not altogether vague, and that the resentment he was exciting in her would not be without justification. He was certainly wrong, not only in agitating the heart of an unfortunate creature, the victim of the most impassioned, the most undisciplined emotions; but he was doubly wrong in seeming to be captivated with the allurements of a vain coquette, already married to another man, and in every point of view a person unworthy of being made the medium of wounding the affection and the peace of a virtuous wife. But after having long been teased to the utmost excess, he was at last deeply offended by Catherine's unhappy jealousy: and being with the kindest disposition, still human, his hour of revenge was come, and he availed himself of it. His

attention to Augusta by no means ceased with the amusement in which they were engaged. It had hitherto been only by stratagem that she had contrived to keep him near her whenever they met in company: but on this evening she had no occasion to have recourse to contrivance for that purpose; he was her willing captive. At length Catherine had the joy of hearing her carriage announced. They returned home in silence, for her emotions were greatly past the alleviation which is sometimes afforded by an avowal of them.

She only betrayed the sufferings of her heart by almost incessant tears, of which St. Aubyn took not the slightest notice, and which he endeavoured not to perceive.

For several days the most perfect reserve continued between them, and during this time he and Augusta continually met. She was always projecting some scheme of amusement, something calculated to relieve her and her husband from the monotony of a *tete-a-tete;* and there were few days in which morning rides on horsback, or water parties, and engagements for the evening, did not rescue her from what would have been as disagreeable to Captain Elliot as to herself; for he cannot be better characterised than by saying he was her counterpart. Never did a greater similarity of mind bring two people together in wedlock. As long as his wife dressed fashionably and was admired, she appeared to satisfy all his pride in her; and coquetry being in his idea a part of the accomplishments of a well-bred woman, he evinced no kind of dislike to her indulging in it, but even made himself a party to his own contempt, by remarking, as an excellent joke, the difference between the lover

and the husband, and the easiness with which he himself, as the latter, committed his wife to any attentions but his own.

The unqualified disdain this kind of behaviour excited in Catherine she never failed to display in manner to the Captain, and in words to a great many other persons. She was therefore nearly as much an object of dislike to him as to his wife; and far from reprobating, he would have been more likely to have enjoyed and encouraged any scheme of Augusta's for tormenting her. Her attachment to her husband was not to be concealed; and, flattering as any testimony of affection may be to a man before marriage, there are few who do not attach something absurd to any public display of it afterwards. Without being aware of it, Catherine, independently of this unfortunate business, had long been in somewhat a hazardous situation with respect to St. Aubyn. He was so entirely her all, that when with him, she saw no one else, she thought of no one else. The opinion of the world!—she would have laughed at it, had it presumed to offer any respecting her. And this is ever the case with devoted women! To love is their destiny! without it their history would be a blank. But it is not so with men. To them, excepting with the weak and puerile, it is an interruption—a sentiment which for a time is submitted to, but which is always recognised as a weakness, and perpetually resisted as such. Catherine had often smiled to witness the struggles of St. Aubyn to assume the careless demeanour of a husband when in public; and often had she been elated with joy, to remark how silently, but how surely, his attentions were restored to her, if for an instant she became the object of

traction to any other man; and how impossible it was for him long together to continue the indifference he endeavoured to assume. But the moment he began to try to wear it, should have been a moment of warning to her. She might have been sure that, sooner or later, he would be successful in controlling such manifestations of his affection for her, as it might appear to him (as indeed it does to most men) ridiculous to betray for his wife; and that nothing was so likely to enable him to achieve the disguise of his regard after which he was labouring, as her unguarded exposure of the fervour of her attachment to him. But he was to her the centre of thought, and she had no solicitude beyond her anxiety to preserve his love. Ah! vain solicitude! misplaced anxiety! nothing human *can* justify this intense affection. The imperfections of mortality perpetually impede its exercise, and teach us that nothing below the Creator himself is worthy of the entire devotion of his creature's heart.

The coolness which at this time sprung up between her and St. Aubyn, was a thousand times more insupportable than would have been a state of mutually avowed displeasure; but the indignation with which he had inspired her would have prompted her to die rather than ease her suffering heart, by making any overtures for a reconciliation. Poor, misguided girl! As if she really *could* sustain the part she was acting! As if, by affecting indifference, she could persuade herself that she actually felt it; or as if it were possible for her to resign St. Aubyn's love, in the cold carelessness with which she endeavoured to make him think that she perceived it departing from her —and was content to perceive it! Ah, it was not

for Catherine this resolute destruction of feeling! She *might* attempt it, and powerful pride might, and did, for a time, support her efforts; but nature was eventually too strong for her! She at length wholly sunk beneath the pressure of her terrible emotions. She gave herself up entirely to their impulse; and when St. Aubyn was continually occupied in engagements with the being who had, as she believed, robbed her of his love, opportunities were not wanting to tempt her to do, what jealous women to their destruction are so prone to do—accuse and revile, and if it were not completely gone before, accelerate by their own imprudence the consummation of their misery—the total and avowed loss of a husband's respect and affection. Yet not suddenly or wholly was Catherine bereaved of it. Much patience, and tenderness, and meekness, frequently characterised his conduct towards her in this bitter period of her life; and at times he prevailed with her, and she was for an interval calm, though never happy.

One thing was essential to her peace: without it, she found it to be in vain to struggle after any consistency, or even propriety of behaviour to St. Aubyn.

It was to remove entirely from their vicinity to the destroyer of her happiness, by his exchanging into another regiment. But, though she was well assured, that her total want of mental discipline rendered such a measure little less than absolutely necessary, she had sufficient understanding left to be ashamed of proposing it, more especially as St. Aubyn never by the most distant hint appeared to have the slightest idea of making such a sacrifice to her feelings. That he did not entertain such a notion, was often an aggravation of her wretchedness; for

viewing every thing herself through an extravagant and distorted medium, she wondered that many of the strange chimeras that disturbed her poor brain should not present themselves to him. If he were sincere in the assurances he had solemnly made her, even upon his knees, when she was most frantic, that his sentiments for Augusta were nothing more than those he should entertain for the commonest acquaintance—if he were sincere, she frequently said to herself, surely it would occur to him, as the most satisfactory and the readiest way to restore her confidence in him, to remove entirely out of Augusta's way.—The victims of passion are always selfish—always unjust; and his sacrifice of connection, of convenience, and of every personal consideration, to humour the caprice—for such it must have appeared to him—of a jealous wife! these were reflections she did not encourage, till reflection was useless, in coming too late.

Augusta had been married, and had been with them more than a year, and the greater part of that time St. Aubyn and Catherine had continued in the state we have described, of alternate dispute and reconciliation—a state of all others the most to be deprecated between married persons, especially by a wife. In all disputes, in all cases where affection is liable to be sacrificed, as it must be in quarrels, she is certain to be the sufferer. Her husband's resources are more numerous than hers. He is not so dependent upon her kindness, as she is upon his. If she renders his fire-side uncomfortable to him, he can go to that of a friend, where he is sure perhaps of seeing nothing but smiling faces about him. Ah! wretched the woman, that drives him to make the

contrast! Better would it be for her to be carried to her own grave, than, by her defects of temper or self-command, to render the home that nature has made his sanctuary, the living tomb of her husband's happiness. And this it was Catherine's to effect! Her dissatisfaction, ill repressed in the first instance, and nourished by the phantasies of a cruel imagination, daily increased. St. Aubyn gradually began to lose all patience with her. Passionately as he had loved her, Catherine often believed that, at last, she almost compelled him to hate her. Such a surmise alone would have sufficed to drive her to the borders of madness, had she not been already phrensied. Her conduct became insufferable. She knew that it did, and, far from wondering that he could have the heart to afflict her, by quitting her for the most frivolous amusements, and rushing upon any engagement that relieved him from her society, she was almost astonished, when the storm of passion had passed away, that he remained with her as long as he did; and that it was a stroke of fate at last, and not his own determination, that finally separated them. But she was spared that humiliation! They were destined to part, but he left her not for Augusta.

A temporary suspension of every feeling but that of dismay was suddenly afforded her, in the unexpected order the regiment received to embark immediately for foreign service, and scarcely a week was permitted them to prepare, before they were desired to be in readiness at Portsmouth. The only mitigation to Catherine's anguish, in the prospect of being separated from her husband, was the comfort of knowing that he would be parted also from Augusta, and

that no more suffering from that quarter would for the present approach her.

He was grieved, certainly, by this event; but he was not grieved as he would have been a year previous to this period. Never had the change in his attachment been so visible as it was under these circumstances.

Whilst they unfitted Catherine for every kind of occupation, and devoured with wretchedness, she passed the hours of the day and most of those of the night in ceaseless tears, he pursued nearly the same habits, when not employed in preparing for his departure. An hour at least of every evening was spent at Captain Elliot's, whither, indeed, he said he was obliged to go, upon matters connected with their mutual voyage; and it might be so, but Catherine knew not how to hear it. He asked her once or twice to accompany him on these visits: but she was incapable of such an effort. She told him so. She told him that his society was always precious to her, and doubly so when she was about to lose it; but that, when shared with Augusta, it afforded her nothing but torment, and she would rather forego it altogether. He gave her his usual answer a careless "as you please," and left her. Thus did this melancholy week pass away, and the day arrived on which he was to repair to Portsmouth. Catherine was to accompany him, and to remain with him till he sailed. It was only on the night before that he told her, "Augusta also intended to accompany her husband so far on his way, and, *if agreeable*, would be of Catherine's party in the journey." This was the master-stroke of her delight in tormenting. She had

purposely kept back her design till the last moment; till it was impossible for Catherine to impede it, without, as she well knew, displeasing her husband, or making herself wretched. *That*, in fact, Augusta was aware she must be in any case, as she had laid her scheme. To quarrel with her husband in the hour of parting must have made her so. But it was an alternative still less abhorrent to her than to have Augusta's society forced upon her; and, with the most absolute determination, she replied to St. Aubyn, that she would *not* consent to Mrs. Elliot's being of her party; she declared that she would die first! He lifted up his hands and eyes, "Good God!" he exclaimed, "will nothing appease the diabolical hatred you bear against a woman, who you know has never injured you? Is this the moment to continue such infernal revenge!" He was proceeding in the same strain, but Catherine impatiently interrupted him. His advocating her cause at this time, incensed her beyond all bounds. She could scarcely speak for passion—it choaked, it almost suffocated her. She poured forth volumes of reproaches upon him. He bore them in silence as long as he could—at last he started from his seat—he seized her hand. "Say no more, Catherine!" he exclaimed; "by heaven you drive me to desperation! But I will bear it no longer!" he continued, with a violence that intimidated and was frightful to her, from its being so entirely foreign to his nature. Never since she knew him, had she seen him so disturbed and agitated by passion. Had he remained a moment longer, she would have cast herself at his feet to implore his forgiveness; for now, the terror of having completed the work at which she had so long

been unconsciously labouring, the dreadful work of wholly destroying his love, seemed to flash upon her through his angry countenance, and turned at once the current of her impetuous passion into a stream of the most penitent and tender emotions.

But he was gone from the room, and from the house, before she had time to obey the impulse of her heart. In the lapse of an hour, ten thousand different feelings again usurped alternate dominion over her, tearing her heart asunder, and leaving her powerless as a child, totally unable to consider what it were advisable for her to do. She could not believe that St. Aubyn had made this shocking interview their last! she looked upon his return to the house to sleep as a perfect certainty; and she sat, hour after hour, watching every sound, and anticipating his approach, till the dawn of day began to fill her with the most direful apprehensions. The servant was sitting up for him, expecting him as she did; and she rang, to question him if he had any cause to suppose his master would not return. The man looked uneasy, but replied that he had none. His master, as he left the house, had ordered his trunks to be taken to a particular inn directly.

The surmise such an order inspired, filled her with horror. "Oh, fly then there, or to Captain Elliot's: for God's sake, be quick!" she exclaimed, "he will be gone;—or stay—I will go myself!" and, half desperate, she was rushing into the street, but the man intreated her to be calm—he would make every inquiry, and return in a moment. He did so. St. Aubyn had left Captain Elliott's house at nine o'clock, and had proceeded by the mail to London. The Captain was gone with him.

Catherine lost not an instant. She ordered a chaise, and, in a state of distraction, she followed St. Aubyn to Portsmouth. But the departure of the regiment had been hastened—she arrived too late—he had sailed—and she saw him no more!

CHAPTER VII.

Alas! indeed no more!

The first intelligence that arrived from abroad communicated the fatal news of his death. He fell in battle—in the hour of triumph—in the moment of victory! The following letter accompanied these afflicting tidings: but to the wretched Catherine it was long a blank! Many days and weeks elapsed, ere, by intervals only, and with an agony of mind that was terrible to witness, she went through the perusal of it.

"To morrow, Catherine, will be a day of destiny to many of us, perhaps to me! To whom, then, in this anxious moment, does remembrance turn, but to those far distant, my wife, my son! Upon the brink, it may be, of death, I think not of our past unhappy differences. I think not of the angry, the reproachful wife—but of Catherine, such as she was, when first I took her to my arms—the pride of my life—the idol of my affections—the solace for many years of all my sorrows—the mother of my children! Ah, is it possible that ideas once so charming, and in this awful interval again so dear, so present to me, is it

possible they could ever be obliterated? No, it was not possible! a strange delusion misled my dearest, and under its sad influence she destroyed herself and me.

But it was only delusion, it could have been nothing else. It was out of the course of human reason, Catherine, that you should really believe me capable of deserting, and suddenly becoming insensible to the beauty, the talents, the accomplishments, and the devoted affection, which for seven years had constituted the glory and the charm of my existence. And what was the nature of the spell which was to work this revolution in my sentiments? Did it consist in the attractions of a woman so manifestly your inferior, in personal as well as mental advantages, that nothing but a disordered imagination could for an instant have permitted you to put such an insult upon yourself or your husband, as to admit the possibility of her robbing you of any portion of his esteem or affection. Review the past, Catherine, now that I am away from you, and now that the storm of passion has subsided, and only by the ravages it has made upon your happiness you know that it has ever existed—review my conduct with the most rigid scrutiny that candour will permit, and say if you find any instance in it to justify the unworthy suspicions in which you have indulged. You cannot, you will not, I am persuaded—but if yet the power of fancy be predominant—that cruel fancy which has been the poison of your peace—if yet it should prevail, and some idea of injury, at which a mind more happily composed would laugh, should still devour your heart, hear my appeal, the last that I may make, the last that you may hear. As I do hope for mercy

from my Maker, I never loved Augusta! never by any means endeavoured to recommend myself to her favour; never addressed to her any attention but those you and all the world saw, and were welcome to see: nor ever for an instant thought her worthy to be named in comparison with you: far less should have exchanged an instant of your society for her's, had you not driven me from you. But I cease—Catherine is not now revengful and unjust—no, no—I feel too well what are now her emotions, to recriminate, or to do any thing but love, and pity, and forgive.

"Yes, my dear wife, I do forgive you from the bottom of my heart! Oh! that you were but near me to receive my last embrace! for a strange presentiment hangs over me—but I will not indulge it, I will hope that we may meet again! but if this be not permitted me, receive again my perfect pardon for every moment of sorrow inadvertently occasioned me. I know that it was inadvertently; I know that you were often driven upon distressing me by the force of uncontrollable impulse, by the very excess of your attachment to me—and shall I be the ingrate to remember this with obduracy? No, my dear love! I not only freely, frankly pardon you every fault committed against me, but I thank you for your love to me. I thank you for many days and years of past happiness, for many hours of the most enlightened and improving intercourse, gilded by your smiles and your enchanting talents. I thank you for my dear son, whom I need not commit to your tenderest care, for well I anticipate what he will be to you when I am no more. May his affection and dutiful care supply the protection I fear you will so

greatly stand in need of. I tremble at the prospect of your desolation, my poor devoted creature—it unnerves me wholly. I look round for some shelter, some support for you! there is none—no human consolation is within the reach of such an affectionate temperament as yours. I commit you then to Him, who will be your shield and strength. May He protect, and guide, and comfort you—and finally, reunite you to him, whose last thought, whose last sigh will be for you and for his child!

"Edmund St. Aubyn."

Over this letter, at once the source of agony, and yet its only solace, Catherine brooded till memory was almost lost in madness. Now she would press it to her heart—now to her lips—now cast it from her—now clasp her hands despairingly together, and utter the so often repeated, fruitless ejaculation "Oh, had we but parted kindly! had I *but* been near him," she would say; "had I received but *one* farewell—could I but once have been pressed to his heart, could I but once have heard him *say* that he forgave me—I could have borne it! but to think of such a parting as this! only to think of it!" and then, in the despair of her soul, unknowing whither to turn for comfort, she would utter vague articulations, in which a desire for death was all that could be distinguished. Thus a few months passed, and then she began to struggle with life: for such was the harrowing influence of her mental sufferings over her mortal frame, that although few persons die of absolute grief, it was very near destroying Catherine, so agonising, so incessant was its dominion over her.

At length she regained a sort of tranquillity, by framing to herself a mechanical system of quieting her mind, by hastening to any kind of occupation which offered itself. However frivolous it was, to her it was blessed, if it afforded a chance of leading her for a moment out of herself.

Still it was but a languid interest which she derived from any thing; for as yet she had not discovered the medicine which alone "can minister to a mind diseased."

To this balm of consolation she was first directed by one of those trifling incidents which the unthinking overlook, but which to the meditative supply some links in the chain of destiny; and which may suffice to teach that "all things work together for good," to those who sincerely desire "to know the way, the truth, and the life."

We have hitherto said but little of Catherine's son; not because he was not the darling and joy of her existence, but because he was, till this period of her story, generally absent from home.

Till Augusta came to make her miserable, and unfit her for every duty of life, Catherine had delighted to be his instructress; and his abilities being very good, and his desire to learn very great, she had found the occupation much less of a task than a pleasure. But when her mind was unsettled by the wild fancies with which she inspired it, she could pay no regular and proper attention to her boy; and St. Aubyn, perceiving her so sadly unfitted to teach, and standing in need of counsel herself, removed him to a school in the town, where two ladies received little boys to prepare them for larger seminaries. He had

been there a year when his father died. His mother's state of mind upon that event was such, that it would have been cruelty to indulge her desire for his society, by removing him from a situation in which he was happy and receiving benefit, to one in which he could witness nothing but sorrow, and find no improvement. Catherine had, therefore, resolution to withstand the frequent suggestions of her heart, which would have prompted her to take him entirely to reside with her. She would not even indulge herself in bringing him home from the Saturday to the Monday (as in his father's life time they had been in the habit of doing) till her mind was sufficiently composed to admit of her seeing him without such distressing agitation as had made every interview since her loss, a trial of the most painful kind. There was a restraint too in his presence, inspired by the reluctance with which most persons express emotion in the presence of children. Truly has she said, who has said every thing,* "One feels a kind of shame in yielding to the impulse of violent passions beside the calmness and innocence of children. They are astonished at our distress, and cannot account for those storms which are engendered in the recesses of the heart, when nothing around us discovers the cause of our disquietude."

When she became sufficiently tranquil to find enjoyment in his society, Catherine sent for him to pass two days with her. He was then nearly eight years old, an age when an intelligent child becomes in some degree companionable; and he, at an earlier period, had often, with his shrewd remarks and pleasing

* Madame de Staël.

ways, beguiled many of her hours, and made them pass away with delight.

He was the sweetest tempered boy, the gentlest, the most affectionate of creatures. He was naturally this—and his having lived and been educated so entirely amongst women, had considerably fostered his tenderness of heart. Catherine was so unwilling to damp the enjoyment of his visit, by keeping him much in her presence, that she endeavoured to persuade him frequently to seek the much more amusing company, as she imagined he would think it, of the footman, who might ride or walk with him, or assist in his different pastimes. But he chose to stay with her. He seemed to possess an intuitive knowledge of all that was passing within, and distressing her mind. One of her own years and comprehension could not more delicately have avoided any allusion to past circumstances, in the slightest degree calculated to awaken painful remembrances, or have been more watchful not to harrass her with conversation beyond the exact moment of its being agreeable to her. She talked to him with great interest upon the little affairs of his school, and his instructors, of whom she had been prevented by melancholy events from knowing as much as she ought to have done; and he seemed delighted to engage her attention, by communicating all that could be told about them. When she became silent and languid, he sat down at her feet, and occupied himself in some quiet way, till she was inclined to address him again. There was an air of calmness, and even gravity about him, quite unusual in a child of his age; and which Catherine believed, however influenced, could not be wholly inspired by an idea of her being in such a state of affliction, as

required this guarded behaviour on his part. She had heard that his governesses, the Miss Mortons were sectarians; and that their little community were brought up in such strict religious observances, that some of her acquaintance—who, to do them justice were in no hazard of injuring the health and happiness of their own offspring, by instilling such notions into their minds, intimated that they considered her as an unfeeling parent in subjecting her child to such austere instructors, who would curb his spirit, and inspire him with ideas the most gloomy and improper for his tender years. But as it did not appear that there was any thing specified to the prejudice of the Miss Mortons but their devotional propensities, she was not apprehensive that these could prove at all disadvantageous to a child, who might learn so many worse things than any sort of sincere religion could teach him.

But she was a little anxious and uneasy to find him so spiritless, and she began to question him more earnestly about his pursuits, the books he read, and so on. His clear and decided answers made her quickly comprehend that his studies were of a serious, perhaps what would be called of a methodistical cast. But if they produced an effect upon his manner so pleasing as she had witnessed, such sweetness, such affection, she knew not where the objection to them could properly be made. She scarcely knew whether she was pleased or not to find his little mind thus directed—thus strongly influenced—as she conceived it to be; for, with the vivacity of feeling which formed a feature in his character, she could observe that he was not likely to be lukewarm in whatever bias he took.

He made her more than usually thoughtful and pensive. Her mind fell into a state of musing more elevated than it had yet experienced. Ideas of the kind which then occupied it, had never before excited her attention, or only in that vague, mysterious manner, in which impassioned souls in the hour of anguish instinctively recognise a great, an indefinable being, that governs—that afflicts—and to which in their extremity they involuntarily address supplications, because they feel that His power is at work in their destiny—that His justice must be propitiated—and His mercy must be implored. This was all that she yet knew of devotion. Her little Edmund was the first to teach her better.

She went to bid him good-night when he retired to rest. He was kneeling down to say his prayers as she entered the room. He rose in some confusion, and hesitated, as if unwilling to pursue his intention: but she said she wished to hear him; and without further reluctance, simply and quietly, and as if it were so usual with him as to excite neither surprise nor emotion, he placed himself at her feet, and repeated the form of words he had been accustomed to use. His little heart was calm and undisturbed —but Catherine's! as a cherub from Heaven had spoken—it melted within her! She thought of this neglected child, learning from strangers what his mother should have taught. She thought of that unhappy mother, the prey of conflicting passions, subjugated to every impulse, and how far removed from what appeared to be within an infant's reach—the privilege—the hope—the comfort of prayer. Had it been poured forth by the most sublime, the most accomplished eloquence, it would feebly have effect-

ed her in comparison with the soft infantine accents in which she heard, with a truth of devotion it had never inspired before, that Divine supplication—the summary of every want—of every hope!—"Thy will be done"—were words which hitherto had fallen unmeaningly from her lips, uttered without consciousness, and alas! how much without resignation! But now her heart of stone seemed to be touched; and as the tears streamed down her cheeks, she felt as if but to offer the sacrifice of stubborn inclination had something soothing in it, and she repeated after her child, not indeed in words, but in the uplifting of her wounded heart, "Thy will be done!"

She kissed him as he rose from his knees, and pressed him to her bosom—and then she retired to her chamber, to commune with her own heart. A new sense seemed to have sprung up within her—something happier, better than any thing she before possessed. But she wanted a friend! She felt that all was as yet confusion and obscurity within her; and that, whatever was the benefit she might confer upon herself, she still required some kindly hand to guide her. Amongst her acquaintance she knew of none who were even commonly religious; that is to say, she knew of none who were even constant in such a semblance of devotion, as consisted in frequenting a place of worship once on a Sunday. She had long been certain that her case was beyond the reach of human aid. The total insufficiency of every thing worldly to console, or to direct her, was perpetually exemplified in the dissatisfaction, the disquiet, which had marked her life. She was formed for nobler emotions—for higher hopes—than had yet possessed her!

CHAPTER VIII.

But these emotions—these hopes were yet but very vague and undefined. The little incident that had awakened them, gave place to remembrances, which it appeared as if nothing had the power to wipe away from her thoughts. The loss of St. Aubyn, and of those happy days she had known with him, before her tranquillity was ruined by the indulgence of ungoverned imagination, her present total desolation, and the bitterness of her remorse—these were recollections which devoured every capability of happiness. In this state of wretchedness she was solitary, and unassisted by any offices of friendship or sympathy. Her only relation, Lady Vincent, as a matter of decent attention, had paid her the condolence of a week's visit, on hearing of her loss. But perceiving the small account which Catherine made of her society, by refusing always to see her when she could have the preferable indulgence of her grief in solitude, and soon growing weary of inhabiting a house so totally the seat of mourning, her Ladyship had by this time pretty nearly taken a final farewell of her unfortunate niece, contenting herself with having addressed to her a letter of four pages, containing an abstract of all the remedies against grief with which her reading, or other sources of information, had furnished her; but which, as Catherine did not peruse it, failed of producing the effect her Ladyship anticipated from it.

Little Edmund had approached the nearest in offering consolation to poor Catherine's wounded spirit; but Edmund was gone back to school, and with him was gone her only comfort.

It was about a week after his return to the Miss Mortons, that, sitting one afternoon in a languid, listless manner by the window of her drawing-room, which fronted the street, Catherine perceived a funeral passing along; and drawn to gaze at it by the peculiar interest, which makes all who look on such a scene, involuntarily identify it with that which one day is to be acted over them, she stood silent and attentive—marking the solemn motion of the hearse—the coaches which followed it—the insignia of wealth and consequence which were displayed—and musing with not unprofitable thoughts, upon the vanity which with so much pomp and circumstance conveyed to its last retreat, what was now as valueless as the dust to which it was returning.

As thus she was moralising, her female servant entered the room upon some account or other, and Catherine inquired of her if she knew whose funeral it was which was then passing the window?

Having glanced at it, the girl replied with a hesitation and embarrassment which scarcely belonged to so simple a matter, "that she did not know."

Her manner was such as to surprise Catherine, who could conceive no imaginable cause for it. But little accustomed to have her wishes disputed, and feeling a strange curiosity upon the subject, she desired her to inquire of some one in the street, and bring her the name of the deceased.

Perhaps, but for the opposition it met with, her inclination to know any thing about it would have *passed* away.

But in this instance it was not to pass away! The indulgence of it was to crowd upon her a train of reflections, mysterious, awful, overwhelming! That such would be their character may well be supposed, when the servant soon returning, brought her as a name no longer to be numbered amongst the living, a name no longer to be shuddered at with recoil and detestation—the name of Mrs. Elliot!

"Mrs. Elliot!" she faintly articulated. "What! the Mrs. Elliot"—

"Yes, ma'am," said the maid, anticipating what she would say. And though, from the shrewdness and facilities for observations which servants possess, aware that some peculiar circumstances rendered the very name of Mrs. Elliot one that never was to be brought within the hearing of her mistress, and she had in the first instance hesitated to utter it, yet could she not refrain, now that opportunity offered, from pouring out with a volubility, of which Catherine heard indeed but little, the whole of what she knew about the matter. "Yes, ma'am," she continued, "it is the same Mrs. Elliot that you knew. I heard of her death some days ago, ma'am, but I did not say any thing about it."

Here Catherine sat down, and pressed her hand to her forehead; and the servant went on.

"It certainly is a most shocking thing, to be sure, ma'am—and the Captain away—and she, poor thing, so thoughtless. I dare say there never was any body that thought less about dying than she did. Dear me, ma'am, it was only a few days before she died, when she was more fit to keep her bed, she would go on a gay water party with some of the officers and their ladies; and there they were till twelve o'clock at night—and she so ill with a bad cold and fever—

and so then, ma'am, she comes home shivering and shaking, and they carried her up to bed. But a terrible difficulty they had to keep her there. 'Let me get up,' she says; 'I am engaged here—I am engaged there'—and then, poor thing, she began roaming about her fine gowns. Her maid told me herself, it was quite shocking to think of any body going out of the world so full of vanity.

"But perhaps she might repent for all that, ma'am," she continued, as a faint sort of groan escaped from Catherine, which she interpreted into an indication of the distress with which she heard this narration.

"You may go," said Catherine; "I wish to be alone."

"Augusta dead!" she repeated, as soon as she was free to indulge the fulness of her mind. "Augusta dead!"—and on those two words what associations hung!—Early days of frolic and of glee—sad hours of misery—estrangement—and now, eternal separation. Her own history was so implicated in that of Augusta, that it seemed to her almost as if her part in life had abruptly ended; and as if every event of former times had never any other foundation than a dream, from which this startling intelligence abruptly awakened her.

Yet were there images of past sorrow, which the idea of Augusta revived with a force, which too truly told how real and how wretched they had been!

In vain would she separate in the eye of fancy the form of that unhappy young woman, from another form as cold and as senseless as her's, which ever followed it in the train of sad associations which her distempered mind had linked together. St. Aubyn,

that beloved husband!—Oh, never since the fatal day in which they parted, had the remembrance of him been so vivid and so overpowering as at this hour! and never, never had the consciousness of the injustice of her conduct towards him been so oppressive and so agonising as now, when the death of Augusta seemed to rend away the veil of doubt and ignorance from her eyes, and to shew her at a glance the nothingness of every sorrow she had occasioned her, since this was the end of all.

"Oh, wretched, wretched that I am!" she exclaimed, again and again reverting to the cruel past. "Oh, Augusta!" she continued in the distress of her soul, "I envy you, for you are at rest; but for me there is no rest!"

In these bursts of suffering she passed a long period; at length she sufficiently tranquillised her appearance, though her heart was still the seat of tumult, to determine upon solacing herself with the company of her little boy. It was Sunday, the day he usually spent with her; but, owing to a more than common depression of spirits, accompanied with indisposition, she had not at this time taken him home.

She turned, however, to the thought of him, as to her all; and believing that the soft air of a summer's evening would benefit her languid frame, she concealed her agitated countenance beneath a large bonnet and veil, and instead of sending a servant, went herself to the school to fetch him.

On arriving there, she was informed that he was gone, with the rest of the children and their governess, to evening service at the church; and as it was likely to be some time before they returned home, she declined waiting, and walked from the door.

"To church"—she repeated to herself; "and why should I not go there too? God knows I stand in need enough of prayer—if prayer could do me any good." But to her unsanctified heart there appeared at the present moment to be nothing but a dull dead blank in every thing that offered itself; and hopeless of comfort, she abandoned the thought of seeking the aid of devotion.

Yet on recollecting Edmund, she resumed her way to the church, not intending to enter it, but to wait for him in the walks that surrounded it.

She came within sight of the building, and as she approached nearer she heard the sound of the organ, and the voices of the congregation accompanying it. Perhaps there is nothing more affecting to a sensitive mind than this species of music. A whole assembly joining in the praise of their Creator, affords as lively an image of the blest employment of the saints in heaven, as the imperfection of our human senses will enable us to conceive. Always accessible upon the side of feeling, Catherine stood arrested in her intention of passing the sanctuary from whence this song of praise resounded; and pausing at the door till it had ceased, she felt herself irresistibly led to enter the church; but it was with a stealing footstep, for she shrunk from observation—not only because since her sad affliction she had recoiled from every eye, and more especially at this instant she was as unfit, from the indulgence of extreme emotion, as she was unwilling to be looked upon—but because there was a kind of stigma attached to the particular congregation here assembled, and to the minister they attended, which rendered it essential for all who had a fearful horror of being thought ridiculous, to be

cautious how they were supposed to approve, and sanction by their presence, either the one or the other. In one word, Mr. Fenton was what is called an evangelical preacher. As to what he really was, or what he was not, few, if any, of those who the most loudly condemned him, either knew or cared the value of a farthing. They were satisfied to take it upon trust that he was a ranting, raving enthusiast: and so long as they were not called upon to judge of his merits or demerits by going to hear him, they troubled their heads very little about him, except when the introduction of his name furnished them with an exceedingly good joke.

Amongst no class of persons had this joke been more prevalent, than that in which Catherine had particularly associated—the military part of the society; and, totally invulnerable as she was at this instant to almost every human feeling but that of suffering, a slight shrinking at the thought of doing something ridiculous, as she crept into the church, evinced most powerfully, that of all the weapons with which our spiritual enemy assails us in this scene of warfare, there are few by which we are more easily and totally conquered than that of ridicule.

She crept into the church, therefore, and looking neither to the right nor to the left, she stole amongst a crowd of persons who were standing in one of the aisles. The superiority of her appearance from those around her, soon occasioned her to receive the civility of being offered a seat—a civility which her desire of escaping observation made her somewhat unwilling to accept; but as it came from a very quiet looking old lady, who appeared to be more intent

upon her devotions than any thing else, Catherine availed herself of her offer, and walked into the pew.

The slight agitation consequent upon finding herself in what seemed to her so strange a place, and under the strange circumstances too of being totally alone, unattended even by a servant, occasioned her for the first few minutes to think of nothing but the oddity of her own conduct, and the absurd manner in which it would be commented upon were it to be known; and as she thus thought, feelings of an uneasy kind took strong possession of her mind. But these emotions soon yielded to others far more strange, far more new—and, ah! how far more touching!

Her attention was first abstracted from herself by perceiving a general movement amongst the persons who crowded the aisle, to make way for another to pass; and presently she perceived Mr. Fenton (who not having read prayers, had not yet made his appearance,) approaching to ascend the pulpit.

There was nothing of absurd, and even opprobious, that she had not at times heard attached to this man's name. The epithets of fanatic and hypocrite usually followed it; and certainly he was about the last person to whom, from previous information, she would have been guided for spiritual comfort or direction.

Yet was there something in his appearance which indescribably struck and interested her.

Apparently he was about forty years of age, perhaps not quite so much; for the countenance was one on which intense emotion had left far deeper traces than those with which it had been marked by time. Mysterious thoughts, sublime reflections, agonising struggles, the perpetual conflict of flesh and spirit, were marked in living characters upon every line and

feature ; and the first conclusion to which the rapid spirit of Catherine hastened, as she looked upon him, was this, " whatever he may be, he is no hypocrite." Absorbed in the greatness of his vocation, he scarcely seemed to see the crowd through which he passed—a crowd made up of the most motley group of individuals which she had ever yet beheld. Here stood old men (for they were mostly aged persons, who, feeling the world every day and hour crumbling away from under them, were flying to the only rock on which to seek a foundation for their faltering feet) here they stood, looking up to their minister as to one who was dear to *them ;* who was intelligible to *them ;* who gave *them* comfort. There stood younger persons, not driven upon this refuge by the sorrows of old age, or the apprehended nearness of an awful eternity, but equally impelled to seek it, as the dejected countenances of many manifestly proclaimed, by some of those innumerable afflictions, which in every season and circumstance of human life call loudly upon every heart to think upon these things.

Nor was there wanting amongst this curious assembly the union of all ages ; for looking round to see if she could discover Miss Morton's scholars, she soon perceived her little Edmund, standing by the side of a pale, pensive woman, who she recognised at once to be one of whom he had spoken in no common terms of pleasure, referring also to her instruction almost every thing he had acquired.

When she had asked him, " who heard him say his lessons ?" it was, " Miss Ann." " Who taught him his hymns and prayers ?" " Miss Ann." " Who did he love better than the rest of his teachers ?" It

was decidedly "Miss Ann." "Was she young?" Catherine had asked; but he hardly appeared to comprehend such a question till she had put it in the form of a comparison: "Was she as young as Catherine herself?" "He did not know about her age; she was not so pretty as mamma, and he believed she must be a great deal older; he dared to say she was very old, but not so very *very* old as Miss Morton." By the side of this personage then stood little Edmund; his hymn book in his hand, and joining his small efforts of praise with those of the rest of the audience in the hymn, which, previous to the sermon, they were then singing.

"This child *is* to affect and melt my heart," thought Catherine, as with a sigh, which with difficulty she restrained from breaking into a convulsive sob, she gazed upon him.

The hymn concluded, and again her attention was drawn to Mr. Fenton; and again her mental exclamation was, "he is no hyprocrite," as with a fervour—an intenseness—which compelled her heart involuntarily to go along with him in his supplications, his soul was poured forth in prayer to God, "that his Holy Spirit might be in the midst of them, and that it might more especially bless the words of His unworthy servant, and cause them to penetrate to the hearts of his hearers." A more sincere "Amen" never broke from any lips, than that which insensibly escaped from Catherine, as he concluded this address; and she prepared herself to attend to his sermon with an earnestness which no preacher had ever before awakened in her.

The portion of Scripture he had selected for his text was that striking answer of Simon Peter to our

Saviour's inquiry, "Will ye also go away?"—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Having descanted at some length upon the occasion on which these remarkable words were spoken, he proceeded to illustrate them in language, which might be said rather to startle than displease the mind of Catherine. It was familiar to a degree, but not to be called vulgar; it had the stamp of genuineness upon it; and through whatever channel it passed, it was still the sterling coin of truth.

Her attention followed him not only without effort, but with total abstraction from every thing else. He possessed in an eminent degree that peculiar faculty so desirable in a Minister of the Gospel; the art, while addressing himself generally, of seeming to speak to every individual of his audience, as if that person alone were the object of his attention.

Scarcely could Catherine believe, but that he knew of one unhappy creature amongst his hearers, who vainly sought a hiding place from the terrors of her own mind: scarcely could she think but that she herself was personally addressed, when with a solemnity that appalled her,

"I ask you again," he said, "if there have not been many—*many* bitter moments in your life, in which, knowing of nothing that could comfort you, in the despair of your souls, you were ready to call on the mountains to fall upon you, and the hills to cover you? Have you not, in the paroxysms of your wretchedness, been ready to exclaim against the burthen of existence? Have you not ejaculated with David, 'Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest?' But to whom I

shall I go—to whom shall I turn?—I am pent up in this body, and there is no help for me."

He still went on, but no longer were the sparkling eyes of Catherine rivetted upon him. He had pourtrayed to her a picture of herself which pierced her heart, and she covered her face to hide the gushing tears which were streaming down it.

They did not cease, but they became of a peaceful —almost of a rapturous kind, as, approaching to the conclusion of his discourse, he addresssed his flock in words of soothing and encouragement.

"Yes, my dear brethren," he continued, "well can I appreciate the mortal struggles which, times innumerable, have wrung from your hearts the inquiry of the Apostle, 'Lord, to whom shall we go?' But have you, like him, with holy confidence and undoubting faith, subjoined that heavenly conviction, 'Thou hast the words of eternal life—to none can we fly but Thee—Thou art our shield and refuge, and in Thy protection alone can we find safety—Oh, hide us then under the shadow of Thy wing, till this tyranny be overpast!' Oh, if these aspirations have not been added; if only in the weakness of mortality, you have exclaimed, where—where—shall I fly—to whom shall I go?—how imperfect, how futile, has been the warning voice within. But I will hope better things of you. I will hope that in this agony of spirit you have not not only asked with Peter, 'To whom shall I go?' but that, like him, you have been directed to the only source of life and truth; that you have carried thither all your sins, all your sorrows—that you have prostrated yourself with your guilty burthen at the feet of your Saviour—that with penitence and tears you have clasped your hands in

supplication before Him—that from your inmost soul you have exclaimed, 'I am unworthy that thou shouldst look upon me: I am guilty—I am vile, but I am broken hearted. I am heavy laden—laden with a corrupt nature—stormy passions, headstrong will —and nowhere can I escape from the destruction they would bring upon my soul. But Thou hast called all such to come to Thee. Lord I am here!—here I will remain!—here I will lie humbled in the dust before Thee—waiting if haply some gleam of mercy and of peace may dawn upon my drooping spirit, and raise me up again to life and hope!' "

He paused a little to repress the emotion which, as he spoke, impeded his words, and gave to his broken accents and uplifted countenance an eloquence, which the tears of his audience testified to be to them of the most affecting kind; and then, with the smile of a father addressing the children of his love and care, "Oh, beloved brethren," he proceeded, "never was this appeal made in vain! never did the trembling sinner thus supplicate his Redeemer, and [illegible]et with no reviving answer to his prayer. Go to Him then with all your troubles—all your difficulties —all your sins; no matter what their number or degree, take them to Him, and he will blot them out, so that not one of them shall rise up to witness against you; but your soul shall be filled with peace—sweet peace, that words can never describe, nor can it ever enter into the natural heart of man to conceive; for it is God's own heavenly peace, which doth truly pass all understanding."

He then concluded with a prayer that one and all of his congregation might be filled with this Divine

comfort, and with a blessing—which to poor Catherine sounded, indeed, like a parting benediction, from one who not only wished but sought the welfare of her soul—he dismissed them.

So entirely was she lost in the ideas his discourse had suggested, that she thought no more of Edmund. She thought only of returning home to solitude and to reflection.

Arrived there, she sought her chamber, and upon her bended knees she sought her God. A sense of misery and helplessness wholly overpowered her; and though feeling as if volumes could not suffice to tell the variety of emotions which laboured in her bosom, she could utter nothing. Her words were lost in floods of tears, and in the moanings of a contrite spirit: "I am in distress—I want comfort—*I* want knowledge—teach me!" were the only ejaculations that found an utterance.

CHAPTER IX.

It may be supposed, from the circumstances of the preceding chapter, that Catherine is now to present one of those characters which never having previously exhibited any sort of religion, is by some sudden and unexpected incident, called in a moment to habits of reflection and repentance, and total alteration.

I would by no means be thought to dispute the ex-

istence of such a character or that its conversion might not be as sincere as it was sudden; but I conceive that, in the general way, the growth of religious principle in the heart, like that of every other principle, must be gradual and progressive, the result of struggles and of suffering; and that, where this is not the case, it is more properly to be called religious feeling—a species of emotion which few minds are totally divested of, however the course of education and the manner of life may have deadened it. It was this latent emotion, then, which peculiar circumstances had suddenly excited in the breast of Catherine; and being, as yet, but a feeling, it operated upon her with all the variation which feeling ever exhibits, till time and habits of exertion have transformed it into a principle. And alas! what length of time, what strength of exertion, are commonly requisite to effect this change, even when Divine aid is constantly sought to strengthen the human endeavours, and without which, vainly indeed would "Paul plant and Apollos water." But Catherine was yet young and inexperienced. She believed that the sweet consolation which the hitherto untried specific of religion afforded her, would be as enduring as it undoubtedly was real, and that no return of stubborn will would impede her progress to peace. She knew not (to borrow the language of a poet) that

> "Habitual evils change not on a sudden;
> But many days must pass and many sorrows,
> Conscious remorse and anguish must be felt,
> To curb desire—to break the stubborn will,
> And work a second nature in the soul."

Deeply interested by his fervent zeal, affected with his earnestness, and persuaded that she was improved

by his monitions, she now constantly attended the ministry of Mr. Fenton. But the impatience with which she formed views, and hastened to conclusions upon every subject, presented a material obstacle to her deriving all the benefit his discourses were calculated to impart to any candid and inquiring mind. He taught with the most impressive energy the necessity of seeking, by constant, fervent, and unwearied prayer, for that divine aid which can alone bless and prosper exertion. Yet when the labour of self control was difficult, the deceitfulness of the human heart, always prompt to seize upon any thing which administers to its gratification, occasioned her, not unfrequently, to distort the precepts of the gospel itself; and because she there learnt that of herself she could do nothing, she forgot the freeness with which assistance was offered, and attempted nothing:—a terrible state for the moral powers to be placed in, since it seems to be a law in the human mind that it never can be stationary; but that if its movements are not progressive, they must be altogether retrograde. Religion, therefore, at this period, acted precisely as every other matter of strong excitement had ever acted upon her; its influence was overpowering —but inconstant. It was not the beam of that eternal sunshine, which diffuses over our rugged path a soft and holy radiance, but a meteor breaking forth in sudden bursts of light—retreating, to involve her in darkness and despair.

In this state of mind, an impulse of inclination induced her one morning to call at Miss Morton's school, and, if possible, to introduce herself to Edmund's friend, "Miss Ann," ostensibly to thank her for her attention to the little boy, but principally

ith a hope of finding her sufficiently intelligent and greeable to promise her, in a further acquaintance, a edifying companion for herself. Catherine was ery desolate indeed at this period of her life. The anner in which, for some time previous to the loss St. Aubyn, she had secluded herself from society, ad exceedingly offended those amongst her acquaintnce whom her indiscreet remarks and superior attactions had already influenced to dislike her; and ow, without one friend, she was daily learning that o independence of will exempts human creatures om a great reliance upon the society and kind ofces of their species. It was with a hope, therefore, f discovering something congenial in the mind of Miss Ann," that she now sought her acquaintance. he transient view she had obtained of her at church aspired sentiments not of the most prepossessing ind: nor were they immediately improved by furher observation. She was, as Edmund had said, a reat deal older than mamma. She was apparently ear forty years of age, plain, and almost homely in er dress, pale and sallow in her complexion, reserv-1 in her manners—at first Catherine thought awkardly so, but by degrees it wore off, and she talked *little*. Catherine talked a great deal, for she went ith her heart full of various emotions, in which sinere gratitude for the care and affection her dear hild had received was predominant, and which rompted her to be unusually eloquent in expressing sense of it. Miss Ann heard her tranquilly, and plied to her as Catherine thought frigidly—and very feeling of her heart, as suddenly as it had exinded, clos d again; and the world appeared to her full of disappointment, and every body in it as dis-

agreeable as ever—and she expected to depart as miserable as she came, and much more so. She came with some hope of acquiring a friend, and with her usual impetuosity she persuaded herself she had only appeared to create an enemy: for in her hasty style of discovering the unpleasant, she believed that Ann Morton had taken her effusion of feeling as mere words of course; and that, added to the character she might, from her seeming neglect of her child, have previously bestowed upon her of an unfeeling mother, she now internally reproached her with that of a hypocrite, in assuming affections which her conduct contradicted. Catherine was very much hurt: for, plain and unpretending as was her appearance, there was an indefinable something about Ann Morton, which quite preserved her from appearing as a person whose opinion she would have been perfectly indifferent about. What she said, if it was only in three words, was said sensibly; and though she was any thing to Catherine's fancy but agreeable, she was too mild—too placid, to be called with any propriety disagreeable. The first impression she had excited unconsciously melted into something less austere. Her notice of Edmund was affectionate, and indicated a mutual delight that was very pleasing. Altogether it was really more vexatious to Catherine than she chose to believe, to perceive (or to fancy that she perceived) how totally she had failed with her. But to endeavour by any means to recommend herself to the better opinion of a "*Miss Ann*" would have implied a degree of humility which her religion had not yet been able to impart. She rose to take her leave; but Miss Ann requested her to have the goodness to stay while she fetched her sister, who would be sor-

ry not to see her, as she had been so kind as to favour them with a call.

Catherine resumed her seat, and after a short absence Ann returned with her elder sister: a lady whom Catherine had not before seen, for St. Aubyn had made all the necessary arrangements when Edmund was first placed under their care; her unhappy state of mind unfitting her for any transaction that required particular attention.

If she had been dissatisfied with the quietude of Miss Ann, she had now an opportunity of valuing it by the force of contrast, for the sister was exactly in the other extreme. After exhausting her to the last degree, in talking about herself and her manifold virtues, she put the finishing stroke to Catherine's patience, by alluding, with as little delicacy as might be expected, to her unfortunate loss, and the affliction in which it had plunged her.

"And you too, ma'am, I find have been chastened of late! I hope the visitation has been salutary."

She had all along spoken in a strain of language, the meaning of which Catherine could only guess at. It was in a phraseology which, though used sometimes in a pulpit, is in familiar discourse not very common. It consisted of certain words of perpetual recurrence, which, as far as she could comprehend them, it appeared to Catherine to be little less than impious to apply with the carelessness in which she used them; but as she was not called upon to do any thing more than listen, she sustained her part of auditor very well till the last question, when she became agitated with many painful feelings. To have her sorrows thus familiarly and roughly approached, affected her more than she wished to be perceived.

She bent her head by way of making some reply, though she was little aware of what such a movement would be supposed to convey, till, seizing her hand, Miss Morton exclaimed, pressing it fervently, "You have been so blessed, then! Doubtless it was an experience the most edifying; relate to me, my dear, under what circumstances it was vouchsafed;" —and she was proceeding in a strain utterly unintelligible to her; but coldly releasing her hand, Catherine replied, that the affliction in which she had been tried was very severe; she hoped it had benefited her heart. She endeavoured to proceed, but emotion interrupted her, and, quite unable to control it, she burst into tears. Miss Morton looked at her with a changed and stern countenance, for she had uttered only the calm expression of "hoping that affliction had benefited her heart," without using any of the various phrases by which she was to have been recognised as one of a party. All this Catherine quickly saw had settled the case with Miss Morton. That to her was not material; but it was material, she considered, to compose herself, and not betray before such cold, unapproving strangers the vehemence of feelings with which they could not be expected to sympathise. She walked to the window to hide her tears; and for a few moments endeavouring to occupy her attention with other objects, she would soon have become calm had she not felt her hand gently taken, and turning in some surprise at such unexpected sympathy, she perceived by her side Edmund's friend, "Miss Ann," looking at her with a face which compassion touched with an expression that was almost beautiful.

Pity, at every period of her life, was always too

uch for Catherine, though it was very sweet to re-
ive it: and she in all her sorrows had received
one—she had borne them all alone. When it did
ome, it wholly overpowered her; and she cried till
e sobbed again.

The frigid Miss Morton had been called away
hile Catherine was standing at the window; which
erhaps encouraged her sister in offering this tribute
f compassion to one, who, from her youth, her
eauty, and her misfortunes, was altogether a being
hom few persons could have beheld without inte-
est.

Never was Catherine so practically taught the
anger, the impropriety of judging hastily as at this
noment. She saw no more the coldness, the apathy
hich had little less than disgusted her in the first
ppearance of Ann Morton; but in its stead affec-
ionate soothings—genuine pity. The woe of Cathe-
ine was too real, her despair and remorse too true,
o fail of affecting; and while she wept, the tears were
reaming down the cheeks of Ann; and it was in ac-
ents as broken as if she had been comforting a sis-
r, that she entreated her not "to be troubled—not
o despair."

"No, I am already better—happier," replied Ca-
erine, "for I have heard the voice of pity, for the
rst time these many months."

"If I can be of the smallest comfort," timidly and
oubtfully said Ann.

"Oh, indeed you can—indeed you can," inter-
upted Catherine; "I know nothing of forms—I am
creature of impulse. Will you come and see me
ill you come as to one who is seeking a friend—
eeking comfort?—Oh, if you will do this!"—She

could not go on, nor was it necessary. "I will come to you at any time," she said—"you have only to command my visits; and be assured the hours I pass with you I shall number amongst the happiest of my existence, if I am permitted to suppose them productive of any benefit to you." A day for their meeting was immediately proposed and accepted, and Catherine, having composed herself, then took her leave.

CHAPTER X.

If, in the short conference she then held with Ann Morton, Catherine found cause to change the hasty judgment she had, in the first instance, formed respecting her merits, every succeeding interview (and they became very frequent) elevated her opinion of her new friend; and, in the firmness and unbending sincerity of the counsels she offered, occasioned her to rejoice in the circumstance which had led to their intimacy.

The natural character of Ann was not very quickly to be discerned. Her mind, like her person, had changed with the variations of fate and fortune; but with faculties of discernment so intuitive and penetrating as Catherine possessed, she was not long in discovering that the calm demeanour, the tranquil conversation, the total abstraction from worldly thought or care which now distinguished Ann Morton, by no means naturally characterised her. An occasional burst of energy, like a sudden gleam of

sunshine over a tract of snow, sometimes escaped her, when the impassioned Catherine, reverting to some of the circumstances of her past life, spoke of the trials and difficulties in which her tumultuous feelings had plunged her.

"But from these sorrows," said she to her, one evening when they were sitting together, after frequent and intimate intercourse had permitted them to approach to confidential communication, "from these sorrows, my good Ann, you, I should think, have been exempted in your path through life."

"You may think wrong upon that point," replied Ann. "It is not so unlikely as you imagine, that twenty years ago my feelings were more of the character you describe your own, and that I also have suffered from their indulgence."

"I have sometimes thought that I *could* believe such a thing," said Catherine with a smile. "I have sometimes thought that you were not always *quite* so inaccessible to human passions as you are now. I have sometimes even believed," she continued, encouraged to proceed by the assenting sigh and mournful shake of her head, with which Ann heard her last observation, "I could sometimes fancy there was originally that in your character which at one time must have led you into danger, if not into difficulty. I am persuaded that *naturally* you were sprightly, witty—"

"*Naturally* I am all that is vain and foolish," and she interrupted her with some animation, "and *but* for the blessing of disappointment, such I might to this hour have continued. But God was very good to me, and delivered me from the danger of having my blind imperfect wishes gratified. He *would* have all my heart—oh, blessed be his name for taking

it!" and tears of rapture mingled with the smile th beamed over her uplifted countenance.

Catherine smiled too.

"Oh, I know well what I must seem to you," sa Ann, "this poor devotee, you are thinking"—

"No—no"—and Catherine impatiently interrup ed her, "I love to hear you, and I try to identif my own feelings with your's, but"—she paused.

"But it cannot be, you would say. I believe you Catherine, it cannot *yet* be, but it *will* be, neverthe less. Your heart is not made to be satisfied with th things of time and sense."

"They are nothing to me, now," replied Cathe rine sorrowfully,—"I had done with them when I was left desolate."

"Oh, my love," said Ann, "that desponding tone belongs indeed to one who has been bereaved of thes poor trifles, but not to her who has found those bet ter things which the Christian seeks."

"I seek them with all my heart and soul—but when—when shall I find them," and Catherine clasp ed her hands with energy together.

"In God's good time," replied Ann; "but I, that have passed through the trial—I that have felt the strong temptations which youth, and I may presume to say talents, bring with them—I may tell you that it is not the first—no, nor the second—no, nor the third time that affliction comes and permanently sanctifies the heart. A great shock is given in the first calamity that occurs, and there is an impulse immediately to fly for refuge to any thing that of fers. In your case and in mine, we were directed t religion."

"And it has comforted me beyond the power

language to express," said Catherine. "I do not deceive myself when I aver this to be true."

"I am persuaded that you do not," replied Ann, "but, as yet, you know not what manner of spirit you are of. To discover this, you must be subject to the snares of the world; you must be tempted—you must be tried; then the nature of religious principle will display itself; then like me, you will probably find that feeling, mere human feeling, has hitherto been your guide—the impulse which, under the pressure of suffering, conducts every human being, who is not callous to all devotion, to seek the aid of his Maker; and then, like me too, you will learn that the Lord was not in the wind of human passion—not in the earthquake—not in the fire—but in the still small voice which comes when all these have passed away."

Again Catherine smiled. "I cannot help it," said Ann good-humouredly; "I can give you nothing but Scripture, so you must bear it, if you mean to bear with me."

"I can bear it very well," replied Catherine; "I think you an enthusiast, and that you know—but it is the best sort of enthusiasm."

"You will admit that?" inquired Ann.

"I have tried other kinds." Catherine sighed deeply.

"And you found they would not do?" said Ann.

Catherine shook her head.

"Ah, no!" continued Ann, "they will not do indeed."

"You confess that you also have tried the experiment?" said Catherine.

"I am not aware of having made any particular confession," and she smiled.

"No, not any *particular* one," said Catherine, "I wish you would do so."

"I should be desirous to do any thing that you wish," replied Ann; "and if to give you a brief sketch of my past life would amuse or interest you, I am quite willing to attempt it."

This was a communication upon which Catherine had long felt some curiosity; and she expressed in her animated manner, so much anxiety to receive it, that Ann without any hesitation complied.

"The prominent circumstances of my story," she said, "have been so long driven from my thoughts by other, and I hope far better things, that I trust I can recal them without awakening any of the emotions they excited at the time of their occurrence. But I am very frail and feeble; and if, in this narration, some human feelings, which I fain would stifle, should appear, I do not ask you to forgive me, for I shall have other forgiveness to seek; I only ask you, not from my weakness to misjudge the power of the Divine principle by which I now strive to regulate my affections. That is all sufficient for those who diligently seek it; but perhaps, in reverting to the past, I may"—she paused.

"I would not urge you to do any thing repugnant to your inclinations," said Catherine in a tone of disappointment.

"My inclination is to gratify you," said Ann; "and in thus varying our conversation with a detail of circumstances more consonant to common occurrence than those I am generally led to speak to you upon,

I may not do disservice to the cause so dear to my heart."—She then proceeded.

"I was born in a situation of life very different from that I now occupy. My sister and myself were the only children of our parents. My father was a merchant, and resided in London. He was engaged in most extensive speculations, and the first years of my life I passed in the midst of opulence and luxury. My sister, who is some years older than myself, did not reside at home; she was taken in her childhood by a maiden sister of my father's, who wished to educate her as a companion for herself, professing, on her own part, an inflexible resolution never to change her situation by marriage; and thus holding out to my father a great inducement to part with his daughter, by exciting an expectation that she intended to consider her as her own child. She was thus taken away, and I alone was left to be thought about. I was sent to school, and there received as shewy and fashionable an education as it was customary to bestow upon young women of much higher station in life than mine; and in the pursuit of what was glittering rather than useful, I arrived at my eighteenth year, at which period my history may be said to commence. When I now look in the glass, I cannot but wonder that I should ever have been the object of attachment to any man on the score of my personal attractions; and as I certainly cannot expect that others should form a more favourable opinion on this point than I am disposed to do myself, I am afraid you will think that vanity has something to do in the recollections I am now to pourtray. But, in order to account for the sentiments I inspired, you must,

and may believe, that twenty years ago I had at any rate the advantage of youth—and"—

"I can believe that not many women were, upon the whole, superior to you in attraction," said Catherine, interrupting her; and admiring, as she looked upon her face (not the beauty of feature and complexion, for whatever there had been, there was now no trace of either, but) the beams of intellect and feeling, which rendered the countenance of Ann Morton, when animated by conversation, or interest of any kind, far more lovely than would have been the most regular beauty which wanted this mental illumination. "But pray proceed," continued Catherine, "you had arrived at your eighteenth year, when your history you say began."

"Yes; but I must speak of some circumstances which occurred previous to that period, as they are interwoven with, and form a principal feature in my story, little as they were worthy of it;" and she sighed deeply.

"When I returned home from school to take the management of my father's house, I was supposed by him to have acquired all the solidity and steadiness requisite for such a function; and as he was a great deal too much engaged with his own pursuits to trouble himself about mine, he was very willing to take it for granted that they were perfectly what they ought to be.

"The grand object upon which my heart was set, and upon which the heart of every living creature must be set, was happiness. I felt within myself a capability of it that was almost unbounded. But where to find it?—Ah, Catherine, it is only by learn-

ing with tears and disappointment where it is not; that we discover its abode. It is only when the heart is broken by sorrow that we listen to the Divine command, 'Give *me* thy heart. Give it *me*, who never will deceive or disappoint your highest expectations.'

"We spent our summers invariably by the sea-side. In one of these excursions my father made an acquaintance, or rather renewed an old acquaintance with a family of the name of Benson. It consisted of a father and mother, a son, and two daughters. We were soon very intimate, for Mr. Benson senior was, like my father, fond of cards and company; and the mother, with the two young ladies, participated in my delight in balls, concerts, and public gaiety of every kind: for though in the midst of these amusements, I felt their insufficiency to make me happy, and if any thing better had been within my reach, I could have spurned them with the contempt they deserved: yet having nothing superior to turn to, in the society that surrounded me, I gave myself up to them with all the ardour with which it was in my nature to give myself up to every thing. Besides, I was vain; I liked to be admired: and as I dressed well, and danced well, and talked, and laughed, and so on, I generally found myself an object of considerable attention whenever I appeared in society. Thus, fighting my way alone, if I may be allowed the expression—for I had no friend, my sister being always away—what wonder is it, that, nothing in the circumstances of my life calling out any better, I yielded to all those feelings, which, in a greater or less degree predominate, perhaps, in most women, and gra-

dually became to be little superior to a conceited chattering coquette."

"Oh, you are too severe upon yourself," exclaimed Catherine; "mistaken and imprudent you might be: but that, with such a heart and affections as yours you could ever be this contemptible person, I cannot believe."

"Oh, I was this, and worse than this," she exclaimed, "or how could I have been betrayed into misconduct, which lost me the only heart, the only"—she pressed her hand before her eyes, as vivid recollection seemed to rush upon her with agonising force.

"Do not proceed," said Catherine: "I would not for the world that, to gratify any curiosity of mine, you should give pain to yourself, by recalling events that have long been buried in oblivion."

"In oblivion!" she repeated in mournful accents; "I thought they were so buried—but"—

She paused a few moments, and then, in a firmer voice—"I will go on," she said.

"In the intimacy between us and the Bensons, it was not unlikely, as the younger Mr. Benson was rather what is called a ladies' man, that he should distinguish me with some particularity of attention. He very soon did so; and as his family was good, and his expectations good also, my father encouraged him in his pretensions to my favour. As to myself, I suppose I did the same; but to this day I have never been able to tell how I became so entangled as I did; nor how it was ever possible for me to have held out a hope, which in my sober senses I never could have intended to realise; for, with all my va-

:y and unsettled principles, I never looked forward the thoughts of marriage with any man whom I uld not perfectly esteem and honour. I considered at period, whenever it should arrive, as putting a :al conclusion to the thoughtless, frivolous life I is then leading; and whoever had received my nd, might have depended upon its being accom-nied with affections more valuable perhaps than a perficial observer of my character would have con-lered them.

" No part of these affections had been given to Mr. enson. I saw him as he was—a fashionable, but ry foolish young man. I liked his attentions; they ve me consequence; I saw too that they were en-ed by other young women, and that increased their lue. In fact, I cannot dwell upon this part of my ory; all that can be said to extenuate my miscon-ct is, that I never thought, till it was too late, of hat I was doing; and when I found I could not, ithout incurring, justly incurring, a charge of the ost heartless coquetry, reject his addresses, I ac-pted them. But I cannot tell you the horror with hich I found myself thus involved; I cannot de-ribe to you the anguish with which I lamented the considerate conduct which had occasioned it: a il seemed to have fallen from my eyes, and all at nce I viewed the manifold errors which, step by ep, had conducted me to this desperate dilemma. could not bear it. I determined, let it be followed y what consequences it might, that I would break ff this unhappy engagement. I did so. The re-ult was, that I was little less than reprobated by the hole Benson family—to whom I confess my con-luct must have appeared in the darkest colours. My

rid?" and with difficulty restraining her tears, she se and endeavoured to calm her perturbation. Interested and affected, Catherine could not cease gaze upon her with looks of the deepest sympa- y; repeating her entreaties that she would spare rself the distress of proceeding.

"No—let me go on," she replied, resuming her at; "I must hurry it over though," she continued, for I find I cannot—I must not be too minute.

"Mr. Villiers requested to be introduced to me, pposing of course that I should be inclined to join e dancers; but since I acquired different tastes, I ad invariably declined this sort of amusement. I elieve I had imbibed a disgust for it, in consequence f its first being the medium of Mr. Benson's atten- ions. I felt some pleasure at the approach of Mr. illiers, for I had been struck with his appearance, hich was elegant and gentlemanly in the highest legree. He came for the purpose of soliciting my and in the dance; but on my replying that I did not ance, he did not, as many men would have done, ttempt to argue me out of my wish to decline it, ut with an easy politeness that was quite charming, e took his place by me, and fell into a conversation, hich at first was, of course, made up of nothing ery particular, but which insensibly stole into a strain nore pleasing than any which had ever yet been ad- dressed to me.

"He was a man of the most exquisite taste, and possessing a highly cultivated mind. Compared with the men I had been accustomed to converse with, he seemed like a being of another sphere. Ne- ver had I known such an evening as this. I seemed for the first time in my life to be acquainted with

happiness; for all that had hitherto passed w
for such, was faint and contemptible, when ba
with two hours of such conversation as I hear
Mr. Villiers.

"I may venture to say, that he on his part a
ed to be equally delighted. Appeared!—oh, l
—he was! How often did he render me ha
telling me the impression I made upon him tl
evening we met! How often, almost in tears
ture, have we mutually recurred to those swe
ments, perhaps upon the whole the happiest, fc
were the most tranquil, we were permitted to
Soon, very soon, there came upon me such a st
sorrow! To me it came justly—most justly
upon him—I cannot—I dare not be minute in
ing to you this portion of my story. Mr. V
proposed to me, after a very short acquaintance
was received with the ready consent of my fath
my future husband. As he was already in the
session of an ample fortune, there existed no
cle to impede our marriage, and the time was al
fixed for that event, when I accompanied him,
my father, to Ramsgate. In the perfect happi
had enjoyed since my engagement with Mr. Vil
I had almost forgotten there was such a pers
the world as my former admirer, Mr. Benson
I concluded that he had equally forgotten me.
it seems that he had thought of me, with all th
terness and malignity with which a narrow rev
ful spirit contemplates the unfortunate object
resentment. He had told me, most assuredly
letter he sent me in reply to one I addressed t
at the close of our acquaintance, sending him
his own, and requesting him to return my let

had told me that he could not possibly comply
th such a request; softening down his refusal with
testations of attachment, and plainly assuring me
t he considered me as his affianced wife; and nei-
r could nor would cede his claims upon me to any
rson living. Yet I was not alarmed by all this
eatening; for I never anticipated that he could
ve the baseness to turn against me, the power he
rtainly possessed of injuring me.

"But I little knew the vindictive nature of the per-
n with whom I had to deal. We had been at
msgate about a week, when, one morning as I
s walking with Villiers upon the pier, laughing
d happy, my gaiety was suddenly checked by per-
iving at a distance a figure which I immediately
ew to be that of Benson: a lady was hanging upon
s arm, whom I also recognised to be his sister. A
eadful tremor took possession of my whole frame:
seemed all at once to view the past, the present,
d the dreaded future—for the sight of this man
esented to me a view of all the consequences which
ight follow his meeting me. Oh, how fervently at
at moment did I wish that I had followed the dic-
es of conscience, which often prompted me to make
ingenuous confession to Villiers of the whole of
is unhappy affair! But as I trusted to the great
obability of his never hearing any thing of it, and
knew myself now to be a totally different character
what I was at the senseless period of my life when
occured, I considered it amongst those errors of
outh, which, when repented of, ought in common
stice to be forgotten; and that it would be foolish
well as unnecessary to recal events, that could do

me no credit, from the oblivion in which time has shrouded them.

"While I was thus trembling and confused, we approached nearer and nearer to these people. At length, from a total incapability of proceeding, I turned, and, as carelessly as I could, saying to Villiers, 'let us look at the sea,' I drew him to the parapet wall, and leaned over it, till, as I hoped, they must have passed by. But what was my horror, when close by my side as I stood, I heard the voice of Benson talking to his sister. I visibly shook from head to foot, and felt as if I must sink to the ground.

"'Ann, what is the matter?' said Villiers, feeling me tremble as I leaned upon his arm; 'I am sure you are not well!'

"I alleged a sudden faintness having come over me, and expressed a wish to return home.

"He would have prevailed upon me to wait a few minutes, till I was better able to walk? but I compelled him to come away, by almost forcibly dragging him from the spot.

"I saw by his countenance that he knew not what to make of my behaviour, and by a glance which he threw upon the Bensons, whose voices in conversation informed me that they were close by us, though I dared not turn my eyes towards them, I also saw that he suspected some connexion between the appearance of these strangers and my sudden indisposition.

"I was so greatly disturbed, that for the first few minutes after we got away from them, he only attempted to soothe and compose me. When I became more tranquil, he asked me, but not without conside-

rable agitation both of voice and manner, 'if I knew either of the persons who had approached us!'

"Intent upon escaping his further inquiries, as blindly as it was wickedly, I faintly uttered, 'No.'

"Scarcely was the wretched word pronounced, than I would have recalled it, almost with my life.

"Had I been in any other place than where I was, I feel persuaded that I should have sunk upon my knees before him, and laid open to him every thought that was passing within me. But we were in the public street—my mind was in such a state of confusion and dismay, that I scarcely knew either what I said or did; and only one desire was strongly predominant, in me, which was to retain that affection on which my very existence seemed to depend, and which I dreaded would be dismissed if Villiers knew aught of this unhappy transaction, so delicate, so exceedingly scrupulous was he upon every point of honourable conduct.

"We reached home in silence, for neither of us were inclined to talk. It had been settled, previous to this unfortunate morning, that I should accompany him with a party of friends to a ball that was to take place that evening.

"On arriving at home, he hesitated, as if inclined to walk in; but I did not urge him to do so, for I wanted to be in solitude, to recover from the terrible perturbation into which I had been thrown by this unexpected incident. Perceiving that I did not urge his coming in, he took his leave, saying, 'I shall be with you at the appointed time to-night.'

"This was terrible to me; for I knew enough of the Bensons, to be very certain that nothing in the shape of a ball could pass by them without their be-

ing seen at it. I determined to plead an excuse for not keeping my engagement, since, to run the hazard of again encountering them was more dreadful to me than words can describe. It would have been embarrassing enough under any circumstances; but my wretched duplicity had rendered it perfectly shocking, even to think of the possibility of being recognised by them in the very face of Villiers, to whom I had just denied that I ever knew them. I must stay at home then, at all events, and hoping against all hope, for I reasonably could entertain none, that he would believe I still suffered from indisposition, and nothing else, I wrote him a short note in the course of the afternoon, to say that I felt too unwell to go to the ball, and should therefore decline it.

"He came to me immediately, to endeavour to persuade me, if possible to accompany the party who were going, as he himself could not be released from his engagement to them, as they consisted chiefly of his female relations, who depended upon him as their escort.

"I had only one answer—I could not go—and the present moment not being a favourable one for entering upon a discussion so painful and embarrassing as the subject I had to speak upon would have introduced, I postponed a confession, which I resolved to make him respecting all that had transpired in my acquaintance with the Bensons. Perceiving that he could not prevail upon me, and doubtless believing that I was not ingenuous as to the real cause of my obstinacy, he left me in some displeasure; and no sooner was he gone from the house, than I retired to my chamber, to muse upon the best possible method of explaining to him that part of my history, which

the events of this day sufficiently informed me ought long since to have been committed to his knowledge.

"At first I thought of writing to him, and I sat down to do so; but recollecting the advantage which conversation always affords where there is a design of being ingenuous, I prepared to seek an interview with him, and in a personal conference disclose the case. I knew that he would call upon me early the next morning, and I should then have an opportunity of talking with him; I endeavoured, therefore, to the best of my ability, to soothe my mind into a state of tranquillity; and, in the belief that my sincerity would have great weight with him, I had little doubt but that I should be restored to his good opinion, without which I could affix but little value to his affection.

"I had made no arrangement in my own mind as to the manner in which I should make my disclosure; I determined upon nothing but to tell the truth, and leave that to advocate my cause. Never was impatience equal to mine, when the hour arrived on the following day in which I made myself sure of seeing him; and never was disappointment so hard to be borne as that I experienced, when not only that hour, but the next, and the next passed away, and he came not. Surmises the most alarming took possession of me; but that I thought it impossible for Benson to have been so base, I could have believed that he had met with Villiers, and disputed his claim to my hand, by declaring my former engagement to him. Something very extraordinary, I was certain, must have occurred; for the eagerness with which Villiers always sought my society could not thus suddenly have ceased without a cause. At last I could

bear my suspense no longer, and, as the only means I knew of hearing any tidings of him, I resolved to call upon his cousins, who were staying in the place, and who had been with him the night before at the ball; and, under pretence of inquiring after their amusement on the previous evening, learn if possible what was the reason of his absence from me.

"On arriving there I was shewn up stairs, and after waiting some time without seeing any one, the servant brought me word that the ladies were particularly engaged, and hoped I would excuse their not seeing me. I was upon terms of such familiarity with them, that it was impossible to suppose they were so engaged as not to be able to admit me, had they been inclined. I could only construe such a message, therefore, into a design of affronting *me*; and, though I could not well imagine how *they* could have heard any thing to my prejudice, I could not for a moment doubt but what they had: and, humiliated in the extreme, I turned from the house with a sense of insult, which made me think with a degree of scorn upon them all—yes, even upon Villiers himself—for the consciousness I felt of loving him with a faithfulness which deserved his respect, exempted me from deserving the pain which this strange conduct on his part, and on that of his family, inflicted upon me. Scarcely knowing what I did, or whither I went, I rambled on, in a state of mind that bordered on distraction; for the vague alarms with which it was filled were more insupportable to me than would have been any species of calamity which was clear and defined.

"I went to the pier, thinking it possible that I might there meet Villiers, since that was our daily

walk, and it was now about the hour for it. My mind was only filled with the thought of him—the idea of seeing Benson never occurred to me. What was my horror, then, as I was rapidly proceeding towards a figure which was pensively leaning over the parapet, and which I recognised at once to be that of Villiers—think what were my sensations, when, just as I was within speaking distance of him, I heard my name pronounced by some one who was quickly following me, and on turning my head, I perceived by my side the dreaded Benson; who with an effrontery that struck me dumb, and rendered me powerless to oppose it, requested me to allow him five minutes' conversation with me. At the very moment that he addressed me, Villiers looked round, and perceived me—perceived me thus familiarly accosted by the very person, whom only the day before I had denied any acquaintance with. His look, as he directed it to me—oh! shall I ever forget it? —shall I ever?"—and she clasped her hands in the vehemence of feeling, incapable for many moments of proceeding. At length, "I sprung towards him," she said—"I said nothing, but I extended both my hands to supplicate his stay, for I saw that he was going. He looked upon me once again, and in a low and broken voice he uttered my name—'Oh, Ann,' he said, 'was mine a heart to play with too?' He was gone before I could utter a word, and I sunk down upon the parapet, wishing, in the wretchedness of my soul, that the great waste of waters before me would receive and bury me in its abyss. I could not speak—I could not weep—I could only sigh—sigh as if my heart would break; and, while I was in this dumb agony of spirit, he who had been the occasion

of this misery stood by my side, though of his presence I was unconscious till I again heard his voice, 'I will explain to you,' he said 'if you will permit me.'

"'No, no—go, go—leave my sight,' I repeated with unutterable scorn; 'this is your work—this is your doing!' and at the thought of the wretchedness he had brought upon me, I burst into tears.

"He attempted to soothe me, for I believe he was affected by my distress; but I broke from him, and as if I was escaping from a demon, I little less than ran away.

"You will easily suppose what I endured on my return home. I formed and abandoned innumerable plans for seeking an interview with Villiers; but they were all obviated by my receiving from him in the course of the evening a letter, which, after briefly detailing the circumstances which led to it, concluded with addressing to me a forgiving—but a final farewell.

"I could repeat it to you by heart, but I dare not—I dare not think of that terrible night—I must be brief. He had danced the preceding evening with Miss Benson, and, unfortunately having a curiosity to know if there really existed any connexion between their appearance in the morning and my agitation, he carelessly asked her if she knew me, little anticipating what he was to hear. I believe she did not at the time know of the connexion that subsisted between Villiers and myself, or she could not have had the cruelty to say what she did. She not only knew me, she said, but she was at one time likely to have become a relation of mine; in fact, she told him that her brother to that day held himself engaged to me,

and she did not suppose that I could consider myself free to accept any other addresses than his. So much was Villiers petrified by this intelligence, that he almost immediately sought an interview with Benson: who confirmed it, by offering to shew him my letters, which he still retained.

"For the sort of unwarrantable chattering on his sister's side, which had led to this, Benson affected to be very angry, as he informed me in a letter which he sent me, explanatory of his share in the transaction, and containing protestations of unchanging affection, and intreaties for an interview; all of which, you will readily believe, I spurned with contempt. I wrote him only these few lines:

"'You may rest satisfied—your work is done—you have robbed me of every hope of happiness in this world—let me then hear no more of a name, which I can never think of without detestation.'

"I did hear no more of him."

"Not yet of"—Catherine hesitated.

"Alas! of Villiers?—Yes, of his death. He went to India, and there died; but I cannot—I cannot speak of this."

"No," said Catherine, fondly taking her hand, and soothing the burst of anguish with which she gave this intelligence, "we will mention him no more."

"This sorrow," continued Ann, "was but the beginning of chastening. I was to be many times tried in the furnace of affliction. I had but just regained tranquillity, when my father, through unfortunate speculations in business, from the height of affluence was suddenly reduced to a state of absolute want. To heighten our troubles, my aunt had put it out of

her power to be serviceable to us in our misfortunes, by forming an imprudent marriage, in defiance of all her resolutions to the contrary, with a man young enough to be her son; and whose first act of authority was manifested in sending back my sister to her father's house. She had only been returned a month when my father failed, and upon her this misfortune fell with peculiar force: for she had been brought up hitherto in the lap of ease and comfort, without anxiety for the present, or care for the future.

"It now became necessary that we should turn our powers, whatever they might be, to some useful purpose; and our connexions being numerous, and an opening for such an undertaking offering in this place, we were induced to repair here for the purpose of establishing ourselves at the head of a preparatory school.

"My poor father removed from London, and took up his residence with us. But his misfortunes preyed upon him and undermined his health, and he lived but a very short time after this calamity occurred.

"From this period I have little or nothing further to say of myself. The storm had gone over my soul, but I was still far from God. I had sought him, indeed, in the ravages it had made upon my peace, but He was not there. It was in the still moment of reflection, when one by one my sorrows had passed away, and my vanities departed, that, like the sinful woman, whose accusers had vanished, I found myself alone with my Saviour."

"You are an extraordinary creature," said Catherine, with something between a smile and a sigh.

"I am now a happy one," replied Ann, "and that, perhaps, is to be extraordinary."

"But your sister," inquired Catherine, "how did she imbibe her religious propensities?"

"It was my own story you requested to hear," said Ann, with a smile; "I cannot undertake to add my sister's."

Catherine saw and respected the motive that restrained Ann from speaking upon this point. Miss Morton's religion, as Catherine conceived, resulted chiefly from that love of distinction, which occasionally impels those, who can gratify it in no other way, to make themselves the members of a party, which, if it possessed no worthier objects to support its credit, would certainly deserve the opprobrium that is too commonly heaped upon it.

CHAPTER XI.

The succeeding year of Catherine's life passed away, and insensibly bore off with it the poignant remembrance of her early sorrows. They now lived in her memory as past grief commonly lives in the impassioned mind, as a touching recollection which awakens sentiments melancholy indeed, but sweet and soothing.

In the society of her good friend Ann Morton, the occasional visits of her sweet boy, the exercise of her mental acquirements and her devotional duties, days, weeks, and months flew rapidly away;

and never had there been a period in her life, in which she was so nearly in possession of that species of tranquil happiness, which experience proves to be the best adapted for continuance.

But there were moments—and Ann Morton, in the ardour of her religious enthusiasm, herself abjuring all worldly affections, beheld them with anxiety amounting to terror—there *were* moments, when a lingering after change, and an occasional weariness of the unvarying life she now led, bespoke that all was not yet so subdued as she could wish in Catherine's ardent temperament. As the heaviness of sorrow and the sting of disappointment lost the power to oppress and pain her, the vivacity of her disposition returned, and, even in the midst of the most serious discourse with her friend Ann, frequent strokes of smartness and gaiety would draw from her companion a reproving shake of the head, with which she tried to discountenance the smile that could not be repelled, when she listened to the sprightly remarks that fell from the lips of this child of nature, who, in conversation with one so entirely in her confidence as Ann was, might truly be said to think aloud, so totally was every rising thought laid open to her view.

One morning about this time, Ann received a message that Mrs. St. Aubyn wished immediately to see her.

"I have had a letter from my aunt Lady Vincent," said Catherine, as soon as she had welcomed her friend, "and I want—I scarcely know what—for I cannot say your advice, since the step I ought to take is certainly clear enough. But you are won-

dering what this preamble tends to. There is her letter;" and she took it from her pocket, to give it to Ann for her perusal.

Though the epistle was a very long one, the extreme magnanimity to which Lady Vincent had wrought herself not being to be disclosed without considerable pomp and circumstance of diction, it may be told in a very few words to our readers. The fact then was simply this, that her Ladyship, like the rest of the world, growing older, began to feel the want of society and attention, which she found she could not so easily command as formerly, when her health and means of enjoyment were better. Instead of going out most nights in the week, she was now, by the growing infirmities of advancing life, compelled to stay at home the greater part of her time.—To be alone, was to inflict upon herself a penance which she scarcely knew how to endure; but she found it now so difficult, upon the score of her own attractions, to assemble any of her numerous acquaintance about her, that she cast her eyes upon Catherine, in the certainty of obtaining her as a resident under her roof; and in the hope, that with the aid of her beauty and accomplishments, she not only might still keep in with the world, but secure to herself a companion, which was infinitely preferable to none at all. Moreover, as in the course of nature, she must certainly die, however unwilling to do so, and, in all probability, before her niece, it was as well, she considered, to make a virtue of necessity; and as she could not with propriety do otherwise than bequeath to Catherine what property she had to leave, (which indeed was not much, the principal part of her fortune consisting of a jointure,

Lady Vincent had sent to summons you into the world again, instead of me."

"I would, with all my heart, that it had been so!" replied Ann. "I would that I, instead of you, had been called to stem this dangerous torrent in which you will soon be embarked: for I should have been armed against its terrors—but you, Catherine"—she turned away to hide her tears.

"My kind, dear friend," said Catherine, taking her hand, "what can possess you! Do you think that I am really a poor weak child, not to be trusted to guide myself in the career of life?"

"I think just that!" was all that Ann could articulate.

"You flatter me, certainly," was Catherine's somewhat offended reply.

"No—I cannot flatter you," sighed Ann; "I can do nothing for you, but pray, and that I do every hour in the day. Oh, Catherine—your soul—your immortal soul—if you knew how dear it is to me!"

"I believe it—I do believe it, my dear Ann!" said Catherine, deeply affected with her energy; "and do you think it is not as dear and valuable to me? Do you think I will not strive to watch over and nourish those divine hopes which have begun to live within me? Oh, think better of me!"

"I can only think of you as a fallen child of Adam," replied Ann; "but one whose rescue from eternal perdition is so much the object of my desire, that I know not, now, the affliction that could fall upon me so overwhelming, as to hear that you had sunk down from that state of hope, to which it is one of the blessings of my existence to believe that, un-

der heaven, I have been permitted to be a humble means of raising you."

The truth and solemnity of her manner was little less than appalling to Catherine, who, from the peculiar nature of the religious feelings she had imbibed, was inclined to admit, in her return to the world, the dreadful possibility which Ann recoiled from.

"I think that—I believe it will be better for me—yet, for dear Edmund's sake—for my *dear* boy's sake—Oh, Ann, dont perplex my poor mind, but tell me"—and the conflict of her thoughts betrayed itself in every broken sentence she uttered.

"I will not perplex you," replied Ann. "It seems to me that you cannot, upon every account, do otherwise than accept your aunt's invitation. All circumstances considered, it implies little less than a command, which I believe it to be your duty to comply with. I would say then, go! and may the God of Israel go with you! I must leave you now Catherine; when I see you again I shall be better able to talk upon the subject; at present this trial is heavy to me;" and extending her hand, she pressed that of Catherine to her lips—and was gone.

"They talk of these people being selfish," said Catherine to herself, as soon as she had dried the tears which Ann's affection had excited; "they talk of these people being selfish, hypocritical, canting, and I know not what else, that is bad! Here is one that would shame such calumniators.

> "'What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
> That he should weep for her?'"

she continued, in the words of Hamlet; thinking of the total disinterestedness of feeling which could

draw such testimony as she had just witnessed, of the manner in which "these Christians love one another."

"Some would doubtless tell me," continued Catherine, still in reverie, "that pure selfishness was at the bottom of it all; and that regret for the loss of a scholar, and for the worldly advantages he and I may have brought her, would sufficiently account for her grief at these tidings. But if this had been the case, how easily might she have thrown objections in the way of my proceeding in the measure I am about to adopt! how easily might she have used her influence over such a temper as mine, to restrain me from pursuing it! Instead of which, how prompt her reply—that I ought to follow it. Ah! how disinterested, how genuinely simple and *true* in their conduct, are the real disciples of Christianity! Unmixed selfishness exists in every one else. The philosopher with his system, is regularly selfish by plan and rule; and every thing that excites us as human creatures, *must* perhaps, result from that craving desire of happiness, which is only another name for selfishness. But it is Christianity alone, that purifies this desire from as much of the dross of mortality as can be expunged from it; and day by day it becomes more unalloyed, more bright, more heavenly, till death has translated it to its proper sphere of action, and transmuted it to complete perfection."

While such were the thoughts of Catherine, Ann Morton had sought in solitude to regain the composure of mind now so habitual to her, and which this unexpected intelligence had so much disturbed.

Her knowledge of the character of Catherine inspired her with doubts, reasonable enough, of her

stability in religious profession, when, added to the daily reviving gaiety of her natural disposition, she was assaulted by those temptations from the world, which the habits of Lady Vincent, and a London life, would, infallibly, assemble around her. "But I know that Thou art all sufficient!" she continued, with uplifted eyes; "I know that thou wilt keep those whom thou hast chosen! Oh, take for thine own, this creature for whom I pray—and that dear child, whom, for so long a time, thou hast given me to train up in Christian education. Deliver them from the enemy! and, amidst all the snares of an ungodly world, let them ever be found amongst thy children, secure in thy protection, sheltered by thy love—and at the last, received to thine eternal kingdom!"

No species of affliction could befal Ann Morton, which the resource to which she now applied, did not avail to comfort. She descended from her chamber calm and tranquil; she went about the duties of her school as if nothing had occurred to interrupt the smooth current of her thoughts; and when again, she and Catherine met, she was the same in every respect as if their last agitating interview had never occurred.

She assisted in making preparations for their departure, which Lady Vincent had particularly requested might not be protracted beyond what was absolutely necessary, and, at the end of a week, she came with an unchanging cheek to take her last farewell, and witness their setting off.

Catherine herself was all emotion. Not one intelligible word could find utterance from her lips. Nothing but sighs, and floods of tears, testified how deeply her heart was touched in this separation from

her dearest and sincerest friend; for such, since the loss of St. Aubyn, she had ever called and considered Ann.

"You will—still love"—she attempted to add more, but in vain.

"Every thought of you both will be a prayer!" said Ann, interpreting what Catherine would have said; "now let us add no more." Her voice faltered as she spoke, and tears rose to her eyes; she tried to hide them on the cheek of Edmund, who held up his face, quite wet with tears, to take her parting kiss. "God bless my child!" she uttered; not as a common parting benediction, but with a fervour that rose from the bottom of her soul.

"Both mother and child—may he bless with an everlasting portion!" she had just power to articulate, as, turning from him to Catherine, she received her last adieu.

CHAPTER XII.

In looking forward to advancing years, we seem to be gazing upon a mysterious avenue of a length so interminable, that we think our footsteps must fail to bring us to its close. But arrived there, the scene through which we passed, appears to have vanished, and in the eye of fancy, we seem almost to stand upon the very point from which we set out.

And hence what Crabbe so forcibly calls—

> "This age's riddle—when each day appears
> So very long, so very short the years."

The lapse of time in the history of every individual, will be fraught with manifest and important alterations. The change of youth to middle age, of middle age to decline, and of decline into old age, are events by which the smoothest destiny must be diversified, however unvarying in other respects. But these are changes so imperceptibly accomplished, that if the current of life be unruffled by storms we sail down it unconscious of the space we pass, till some restless "*compagnon de voyage*," less contented than ourselves to forget it, compels us by some unhappy remark (too true to be contradicted) to look back and wonder at our progress.

Without such a monitor, or without a far better one in religion, it would be difficult to say how many years might roll over our heads unimproved, and almost, unobserved.

Yet where is the person so insensible, who, if addressed in a warning voice in these words, "five and twenty years hence, you will be in all respects, excepting the changes that time must make in your appearance, the same creature that you are now," where is the person who would not reply, "impossible!" The young would say, "I shall have renounced the follies of my youth—I shall have acquired steadiness of conduct—I shall be married—I shall be settled—in short, I shall be altogether a different person." One of middle age would reply, "I hope not—I hope by that time to have done with

orld—to have made my peace with God—and looking for better things than I can find here."
as for the aged, they would reasonably enough
k, that "for them there existed no such period
was time for them already to be making up their
nts, and they only waited till such an event, or
and such things had taken place, to give them-
up to the work of religion, and withdraw
y from worldly matters." In short, they would
wait till death had stepped in to take from them
temporal anxieties, which, in a mind unsanc-
by the influence of religion, as a vital and go-
ng principle, cling to it to the last stage of its
nce.

w persons would more indignantly have retort-
e unlikelihood of such a case, if, on the day
therine's departure from C—— she had been
ssed in the manner we have spoken of above.
am already an altered creature," she would have
—"I feel quite sure that I can never forget the
knowledge I have lately acquired—I feel cer-
hat I can never again be the careless, unthink-
haracter I once was—I am convinced that as
as events may permit me, I shall return here—
l fix my dwelling here—and in my religious
, the welfare of my son, and the society of good
Morton, I shall withdraw myself from all other
its—all other hopes."
:h would have been the ready reply of Cathe-

judge how far she would have been right in
xpectations of her own conduct, I must request
aders to consider that interval as actually past.
a startling period, indeed, to suppose so rapidly

flown! but when departed, it scarcely appears to the mind to occupy a greater space than that which has elapsed since we told of her quitting C—. We attend her now at her present residence. It is not at C——, where she would have specified that it would be; but in an elegant cottage at Wimbledon. Lady Vincent has been many years dead, and has bequeathed to her niece some portion of her property, the other part to her nephew Edmund. In the possession of competence, and amidst an elegant and fashionable neigbourhood, Mrs. St. Aubyn, as in respect to her added years, we ought now to call her, has fixed her dwelling. It will be concluded that Ann Morton, so esteemed, so beloved, is often her companion, if not her constant guest. But it is not so. At the moment of parting, Ann was truly the friend most dear to her heart, and for a length of time after her residence in London, Ann's letters were received as desired, and were valuable correctives to the temptations with which she soon found herself surrounded. But as the dangers decreased in her apprehension, the monitions that warned her against them became less pleasing—less welcome; in fact, they gradually became to be less intelligible. They sunk in her opinion into the character of enthusiastic effusions, and, finally, into little less than the ravings of fanaticism; for as Ann's dread of her friend's apostacy became more potent, her warnings were more energetic; till wearied and impatient, Catherine released herself (as kindly indeed as language would permit so unkind an action to be) from an intercourse which circumstances rendered so foreign to her present habits and pursuits. Still she retained a *sort* of religion. In the opinion of Lady

ıcent and many others, she was exceedingly reli-
us, scrupulous to a fault, &c. &c. *viz.* she had
se vague ideas of her own nothingness and insuf-
ncy to help herself, which impelled her occa-
ıally to pray, and always to believe in a God. In
rt, she was religious after a manner of her own,
fancied that it was a far better manner than that
Ann Morton, because it admitted, as she said to
self, when conscience was troublesome, of her do-
as other people did, living in the world like a
ature that belonged to it; and various other things
ch she found it extremely pleasant to do, and
ich Ann in her epistles was always seeking to pre-
t her doing, by bringing forward texts of scrip-
, which Catherine was told by very moral good
ple (to whom, in the not very comfortable state of
mind, she was frequently led to talk upon the sub-
t,) had no more reference to her case than they
l to that of the North Americans. "Love not
world, neither the things that be in the world,"
re words which she was informed did not apply
her. The words were in the Bible, to be sure,
l they were rather difficult to explain away. "But
was natural," they told her, "to love company,
l music, and balls, and plays, and operas, and be-
les why should they exist? why should they be
rmitted, if people were not to enjoy them? How
re stage players, and public singers, and painters,
d poets, and all the people who lived by these
ngs, how were they to get their bread, if nobody
ronised them?" To all of which, as she was wil-
g to attend and to be convinced, Mrs. St. Aubyn
d nothing to reply. It did occur to her, that by
same course of reasoning, it might as well be

asked, how persons of the most infamous character were to earn their bread, if no one encouraged them in sin? But, as we have said, she was willing to be convinced, and the result was, that in the course of time, Ann Morton was remembered as an amiable, and pleasing companion; but as one who was once very near leading her into a dangerous path, and whom, it was impossible for any sober minded person to regard in any other light than as a dreaming fanatic. Their letters became less frequent, and, at the period of which we now speak, had, for some years, entirely ceased.

Edmund, or, as we must now call him, Mr. St. Aubyn, had grown from a youth into a man. His income not admitting of his living without the exercise of some profession, he had made choice of the church; for the duties of which, early prepossessions, firm religious principles, and the peculiar mildness of his disposition, eminently qualified him.

After having distinguished himself in the most honourable manner at the university, and made the tour of the continent, he had yielded to the intreaties of his doting mother, and had taken up his residence entirely with her.

He at present held the curacy of Wimbledon, and had chiefly resided there for the last five years. But as he is now to form one of the leading personages of our story, we shall be better introduced to his acquaintance, by accompanying him in a walk he is just going to take from the door of his mother's cottage.

"How lovely is every thing!" said he, stopping to look round him.

It was a calm sunny day in the latter end of spring

—one of those days in which every living thing seems to rejoice. Upon the hedges, white with blossoms that sparkled in the sunbeams, were innumerable little birds, some twittering and hopping about, and pruning their feathers, others perched upon a topmost bough and singing to the utmost extent of their powers. He went on in his walk—still pausing at intervals to cast a pleased glance around him.

In one of these moments of admiration, something still more lovely than the face of nature met his view. It was the form of a very beautiful girl about nineteen advancing towards him.

"Matilda!" he exclaimed; and with a familiarity which the difference of their age, and their relative situation to each other (for he was her guardian) rendered quite natural, he approached, and taking her hand, he drew her arm through his own. "You are quite a stranger, my dear," he continued, "I have not seen you this whole week—where have you been?"

"I have been at home," she replied, "but as Mrs. St. Aubyn was absent, I did not know," and she laughed, "that my visits to the cottage would have been quite—" she paused for a word.

"Oh true—yes—" and St. Aubyn betrayed much more embarrassment in understanding her meaning than Matilda in implying it; for she was gay, but he was quite serious. "You were right, I dare say," he added, "but I wanted to see you, for I have got a book for you. I borrowed it, knowing it would please you; and I was now going to take it down to you."

"Ah, you are always doing kind things for me," she replied.

St. Aubyn looked at her with a smile of tender ness. "Can I be better employed, than when I am serving or pleasing *you*?" he said, "more happil I am sure I cannot. But let us sit down a moment Matilda;" and gently restraining the movement sh made to proceed, they seated themselves on a bench under a tree which stood in a kind of paddock ad joining the cottage, near which, he and Matilda met

"What a heavenly day is this!" said he, takin off his hat, and displaying to his companion a coun tenance as open, and glowing with cheerfulness and the intellectual radiance of the mind and heart as the light which then shone upon it. It was a countenance Matilda loved to look upon, for St. Aubyn was dear to her as would have been a father or a brother; and she loved him with an affection as pure and fervent, as she would have given to such relatives. "I feel, as if one *ought* to be happy in such weather as this," he continued, and then he paused for Matilda to speak, but she said nothing, and he went on.

"What an extraordinary thing is human nature, Matilda! Suppose we were all for the first time placed in such a scene as this, and suddenly for the first time also, to be transplanted from it, into a crowded saloon, suffocated with heat, and stifled with gas, oil, &c. &c. and elbowed and squeezed by a number of people who seemed to be assembled for no purpose but to incommode each other. Do you think we should approve the change?"

"I should think not."

"No, we never should—we never could, but for one thing."

"The love of society, I suppose."

"No, I think it would be the love of ridicule.

These poor cattle, and sheep, and birds, are never ridiculous; they never do any thing to be laughed at. But as we commit so many follies, we are glad to look amongst our fellow creatures for something still more absurd, to keep us in good humour with ourselves."

"I don't like your reasoning," said Matilda.

"Can you give me better?" he inquired.

"Yes, I think I could say something about a social feeling."

"Aye, no doubt," said he, interrupting her, "the social feeling that leads man to seek his kind—a feeling of benevolence, affection, &c. &c. I could read you fifty pages about it, if I had but a volume of Rousseau at hand."

"I am very glad then, that you have not," said she, laughing.

"But tell me," he continued, "how much of that same social feeling should you expect to find at the routs which are given in those squares at the west end of the town?"

"Perhaps one should not seek it there. But really now," she continued, "what pains are you taking to make yourself out a cynic; the character in the world most opposite to yours. At least, no one, for instance, has appeared to enjoy more than you, those pleasant evenings we have so often spent, in your dear mother's society, and with the Willets, when you used to read to us."

"Yes, those were social evenings, indeed!" he replied with energy, and he mused a few moments upon the recollection. "And for a *pleasure*, he continued, "they have not passed away quite so rapidly as might have been expected. We have been ac-

quainted now a long time, Matilda," he added after a little interval.

"Yes, it is now some years," said Matilda.

"I can tell you to a day, how long," he replied with much vivacity. "It was the first summer of my having the curacy here. You were then quite a little girl. I remember I was struck with your being so constant at Church. Whatever part of the family was absent, you were never missing there."

"Well, that is but a small merit to dwell upon," she replied.

"I could dwell upon many others, Matilda," said he, in a tone of affection.

While he spoke, Matilda rose, but he intreated her to remain. "We will not talk of the past," said he, reminiscences are seldom pleasant. The present moment is all that is valuable to us, and if it were always such a moment as this—" He paused, and spoke no more for a little while; when he did, it was in a gayer tone, and as if he had shaken off impressions that were too serious.

"This is one of nature's holidays," said he. "Now can any thing give you a stronger idea of joy than that!" and he fixed his eye upon a bird, that perched upon a spray near them, was warbling till his little throat was swelled with his exertions. "Is not that the language of happiness?"

Matilda smiled, but did not reply. She liked to let his vein of moralising take its course.

"And *there* is another method of exhibiting delight!" and he pointed to some frolicksome lambs, who were chasing each other up and down a little hillock, skipping and dancing as if they did not know how to make the most of life. "Oh but you are

tired of being happy, are you?" continued he, observing one or two of them, to give up their sport, and with a plaintive cry run to seek their mothers, amongst the quiet sheep who were contentedly browzing in another part of the meadow, but who recognised their offspring with a bleat of tenderness which some association made almost affecting to Matilda.

"Their mothers love *them*!" She could not refrain from remarking to herself, and her eyes filled with tears as the thought occurred to her.

St. Aubyn seemed to read what was passing in her mind; for, suddenly foregoing his strain of careless and trifling remark, he raised his eyes, and looking at the clear blue heavens, and the glorious sun that was riding in them, he repeated the lines from Cowper, with a smile as beautiful and devotional as the words he uttered:

> ——"His t' enjoy
> With a propriety that none can feel,
> But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,
> Can lift to heav'n an unpresumptuous eye,
> And smiling say, 'My Father made them all!'"

"Yes, Matilda, *He* is our Father!" he repeated, just touching her hand, as he spoke.

Her heart acknowledged a sense of his benevolent feelings in the sweet smile that beamed from her face, as for a moment she raised it to his; but she made him no other reply; and St. Aubyn after a short silence, dissipated a degree of melancholy that was stealing upon him, by inquiring "if she would not call upon his mother?" "I came for that purpose," she replied; and they proceeded through a pret

garden, indicating in its neat and tasteful arrangement the superintendence of an elegant mind. It led to a small dwelling, that seemed to be one of the very bowers that Spencer has described, rising amidst a wilderness of sweets. A profusion of roses were climbing about the walls, and round about on every side the bright tints of the laburnum mingled with the lilac, till the eye almost ached with the vivacity of their hues.

Matilda looked around her with a smile.

"I do love this place," she said.

"And its inhabitants, I hope," and St. Aubyn looked at her with much expression.

Her reply, if any she intended, was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Mrs. St. Aubyn, who, with a flower-pot in each hand, emerged from a gravel-walk near them; so intent upon her occupation of gardening, that she saw neither of them, till Matilda, running towards her, gave her a greeting of much delight, not having seen her during the last week which Mrs. St. Aubyn had spent in London.

"My dear little girl, I am delighted to see you," said she, bending her cheek to receive Matilda's kiss; then seating herself upon a garden chair, and motioning for Matilda to do the same, "oh, this last week in London, my love," she continued, "has been the death of me! Public places are just as stupid, and people are just as silly, and the fashions are just as frightful as they were last year; and yet one goes hunting after them all, till one is tired to death, spending one's money and losing one's health, and temper too, and then one comes back to put on old clothes, and like them better than the new; and

to say twenty times a day, there is no place like one's own dear home.

"But what are you doing, Edmund, with that unparalleled geranium, for which I gave—I won't say what—at Melcombe's nursery grounds, only last Friday!" And springing up with much agility, she took it from his hands and brought it towards Matilda, to give her a clearer view of its beauties; expatiating upon them with all the interest and vivacity of fifteen.

While she stood talking about the plant, St. Aubyn fixed his eyes upon her with an affection which Matilda could not observe without a smile.

Mrs. St. Aubyn observed their interchange of looks, and herself laughing, she put down the flower-pot, "and now you are very much amused, both of you, to see an elderly body like me interested about these wretched trifles," said she; "but—"

"But it must be so," interrupted St. Aubyn, affectionately laying his hand upon her shoulder: "a divided interest, this good mother of mine can give to nothing, and whether it be a flower, or a fashion, or a foolish son, it never can be said that she is lukewarm about it."

"Well, but we have had enough of plants," she replied gaily, "so now, love," she continued, addressing Matilda, "tell me what you have been about since I have been gone; and when does Charles Harcourt come?—ah Matilda," and she pursued with an arch glance the smiling but crimson face with which the latter heard this name pronounced.

St. Aubyn at this moment got up and walked away, and his mother, as if conceiving his absence removed

all restraint, renewed the subject in a more serious tone. "I had not a conception," said she, "that there was any thing like an engagement between you and Charles, till the Willetts told me of it the other day in town:" She paused: but Matilda in visible embarrassment remained silent, and in a slight tone of reproof Mrs. St. Aubyn proceeded.

"I thought, indeed, considering our long acquaintance, and the affection I have always felt for you, that such a thing could not have taken place *without* your confiding it to me—but I find I was mistaken."

She ceased to speak, evidently with increased dissatisfaction at the confirmation which Matilda's silence gave to the report she had heard, certainly, with much doubt of its truth; as she *believed* her young friend's attachment to her was too strong to admit of her having taken so important a step, without at least informing, if not consulting her upon it.

"But this is a mistake not worth looking grave about," she continued, turning to Matilda with a smile, indeed—but not such a smile as could give her pleasure, for it was clearly assumed for the purpose of concealing emotions which would more naturally have expressed themselves in a frown.

Matilda, who loved her, it must be confessed, with an ardour which it was not possible for her to experience in the feelings her own mother excited, had no difficulty in removing her transient displeasure, by the affectionate manner in which she replied. "My dearest Mrs. St. Aubyn, I came this morning for the purpose of being quite candid with you, and telling all I have to communicate respecting myself." But as Matilda's communication would be somewhat

unintelligible to our readers if unconnected with other circumstances, we must dedicate the following chapter to the elucidation of it.

CHAPTER XIII.

It had been the misfortune of Mrs. Belgrave to be born a beauty, and to have been educated by a weak ambitious mother; who, having imbibed a notion, from the only course of reading she pursued, that the fair sex were created to be adored, and were to proceed from one conquest to another, till their victories were crowned by a successful marriage, had very early instilled into her daughter an idea of self importance, which, even in the period of her blooming youth, often made her ridiculous, and now, at a more advanced season of existence, contributed in no small degree to render her wretched. Mrs. Belgrave was now for the second time, a wife. In neither union could she have been said to marry upon principles calculated to promote happiness.

The first time she had been induced to enter into the holy state of wedlock, her intention was chiefly to acquire the importance of a married woman at the early age of seventeen. There is something particularly august to the imagination of very young ladies in a wedding ring, and the exchange of the unmeaning common appellation of "Miss" for "Mrs." Satin, lace, pearls, bride cake, visits and visiting cards, every circumstance attending the ceremony, is grand and impressive; and if he is not very old,

and very hideous, gratitude to the man who offers an opportunity of being elevated to these dignities, will generally prevail in his favour.

This was the case with Miss Wilmot in accepting the hand of Mr. Grey—a man worthy of a brighter destiny; a man who, but for one unfortunate weakness, seemed to have been designed by nature, from the superiority of his understanding, joined to the gentlest, the most persuasive manners that ever distinguished an accomplished scholar, to have ruled and guided the hearts and minds of those with whom he lived.

But it was his error, like that of many as wise men who had gone before him, to be too much charmed by the power of beauty; and when, in his thirty-second year, it was his lot to meet with a college living and Miss Matilda Wilmot, both at the same time, his case was perfectly clear,—nothing became more certain than that he intended to take them both.

Nor was he for this to have been much condemned; unless the penetrating faculties of a man in love ought to be quite as much upon the alert as those of a disinterested person. Indeed, the most disinterested person, seeing Miss Wilmot only under the circumstances in which she was constantly presented to the observation of Mr. Grey, with her prevailing passion of vanity entirely gratified by receiving homage, and her irritable temper suppressed by every possible indulgence, would have found some difficulty in refraining from admiring her.

On all subjects that were entirely abstracted from herself, there was no deficiency of intellect in Miss Wilmot: but it was the intellect of a mind absorbed in self. There was sensibility in her character—but

as too was the sensibility of selfishness. She had rong, impetuous feelings—but she wanted delicacy sentiment—she wanted enlargement of thought. he constant, unfailing attachment she bore to her- lf confined every faculty within the magic circle of r own opinions and feelings. *Self* was the idol to ich she referred every thought and every action. very thing she engaged in produced a *scene*; her ole life was a drama, in which she, as the princi- l performer, was to attract attention; and in pro- rtion as that attention was paid her, she was more less miserable, or happy.

Such was the woman, whom, at the end of a elvemonth, Mr. Grey found that he had married; t as the case was irremediable, he resolved like a ilosopher to make the best of it; and like, what is still better, a good man, to view the errors of his fe through as favourable a medium as possible. er beauty, which was hardly yet in its prime, still aintained its influence over him, and sanctified ma- of her faults; but as time passed on, this species dominion became less potent; and the total dissi- larity of disposition between them must have pre- nted the possibility of his enjoying any thing like mfort, if the warm affections of his heart had not and an object in the education of his children. A y and girl, both of them lovely and promising, ere soon the only ties that bound him to the value existence. One of these blessings was lent him t for a short season: his son was taken from him his fifth year, by a fever. The little Matilda was ft to be his only hope; and upon her he centred all s attention.

It was the solace of his life to be her instructor;

and to his counsels she was indebted for a strength and firmness of character, which was an inestimable balance to a tenderness of heart, that, circumstanced as she was destined to be, would inevitably have produced to her the most distressing calamity.

But it was only the foundation of her education that her father was permitted to lay. She had but just completed her fifteenth year, when this excellent parent was prematurely taken away; and she found herself left to the protection of a mother, who had never really loved her. All the affection her nature was capable of feeling had been centred on her son; and the jealousy which her husband's extreme partiality for his daughter had not failed to excite, prevented her from understanding the value of the child, who, she not unfrequently hinted, had robbed her of her husband's love.

No sooner was he gone, than poor Mr. Grey was lamented by his relict after the manner of disconsolate widows. It was quite pathetic to hear her talk of their past happiness. She could by no intreaties be prevailed upon, for the sake of her health, to walk round her shrubbery and garden, for never should she look upon a plant or tree in the grounds that did not recal to her remembrance the hours she had spent with her departed husband in this sweet spot, which his affection and elegant taste had converted into an earthly paradise: no, she would neither walk —nor talk—nor eat—nor drink; her days should pass in one unbroken tenor of unchanging misery, till the wished for moment of dissolution should re-unite her to her beloved husband.

Such, in the first moments of her widowhood, appeared to be her determination. Ill-natured people,

who are never wanting in any part of the civilised world, did put a strange construction upon all this grief, and insisted upon it that Mrs. Grey lamented more for the loss of the *living* than the dead,—the principal part of her income departing with the deceased. Some of them were also very certain that although she was but a child in years, and so quiet, and apparently calm, Matilda suffered internally much more than her mother upon this occasion.

Upon this delicate point it is not necessary to be minute. The result of the whole was, that Mrs. Grey's tears gradually dried up; she began also to eat and drink, and walk and talk: and by the time it was requisite that she should move out of the rectory to make room for the next incumbent, her grief had descended somewhat into the character of grumbling.

A pretty, neat, little cottage at Wimbledon, where she and Mr. Grey had been in the habit of spending part of their time, when he wished to be near, without actually being in London, received her and her daughter; and it became a great solace to her woes, to accept the civilities of her friends in the metropolis, and to share in its gaieties. Her affliction began to yield to the new thoughts and prospects which arose upon observing the admiration her striking beauty obtained for her, whenever she could be prevailed upon to exhibit herself in public. She was soon assured that it would be in her own power, a second time, to secure to herself a matrimonial establishment. Matilda was no obstacle; for, though but slenderly provided for by her father's will, still she was defended from want. Marriage, in short, became again, when she was four-and-thirty, as much

the object of Mrs. Grey's views, as it had been when she was sixteen.

It does not always happen that ladies with such views are able to realise them, even at sixteen, much less at four-and-thirty; it was Mrs. Grey's good fortune, however, to be successful.

One year and a half had her lamented spouse been consigned to his grave, when a gentleman of the name of Belgrave, after a courtship of three months, was permitted to succeed him in the affections of his widow. Mr. Belgrave was about the same age as Mrs. Grey, exceedingly in love with her, as he persuaded not only her, but himself also; and according to his nature, perhaps it might be the case—for he was apt to fall in love with every thing that belonged or had a chance of belonging to himself. He had the finest house, the finest grounds, the finest wines, the finest horses, and he determined to have one of the finest women for his wife, and so he married Mrs. Grey.

He had succeeded but a short time to the property of his father; who had been an attorney somewhere about the Inns of Court. It was a very fine property; and Mr. Belgrave, though he intended it should raise him to the reputation of a gentleman and a man of fashion, was not of a disposition to diminish it by extravagance. He never laid out a penny, but according to the common phrase, he had his penny-worth for it. He wanted now to buy consequence; and though it might, at first sight, appear paradoxical to expect it would be found in a union with a nearly portionless widow, Mr. Belgrave knew very well what he was about, and was not quite so absurd as some of his friends imagined.

Mrs. Grey, with all her vanity and defects of temper, was, to a superficial observer, as we before hinted, a very attractive and elegant woman. Appearance had been the study of her life; and to ensure admiration in every thing she did, was to ensure, as she imagined, all the felicity that life afforded. Mr. Belgrave was very much of the same way of thinking. It signified very little to him whether things were *real* or not; he only inquired how they would look to the world. Thus he never figured to himself, in the enjoyment of his riches, any distress relieved, any friends privately and delicately assisted with money; any quiet, elegant comforts procured —but he anticipated with all the scope of his imaginative powers, the wonder and envy that would be excited by his superlative equipage—his spacious mansion—his good dinners—and finally, the graceful and beautiful wife that presided at them. To procure this last advantage, he was aware that he hazarded a great deal of money; but though he was the last man in the world to have an unfavourable opinion of himself, some decided refusals he had received from ladies to whom he had proposed previous to his acquaintance with Mrs. Grey, had induced him to think, that as a wife was essential to complete his establishment, it would be wise to take the first desirable one who was inclined to be propitious to his suit.

And thus it happened that he married Mrs. Grey.

But Matilda, her daughter, not being, as he conceived, calculated to increase his consequence, though certainly his expenses, was not invited by him or his bride to be of their wedding party to the Lakes.

This was a circumstance which occasioned her no

kind of concern ; as, in defiance of her dutiful endeavours to respect and value her mother's husband, there was an indefinable something about him which she could not like.

It was a great relief to her, therefore, when she saw them drive off in their gay barouche, and found herself left in solitude, to indulge such floods of tears as had never fallen from her eyes since the day she lost her father.

It was in vain that she tried to check her grief, whilst her mother had been privately talking to her that morning, and endeavouring to prove to her, that it was a consideration for *her* interest which had prevailed upon her to accept the hand of Mr. Belgrave. "Yes, mamma!"—and "I am sure of it, mamma!" —were words so impeded by the broken accents in which they were uttered, that they sounded in the ears of Mrs. Belgrave rather like contradiction than assent to what she had advanced.

"I see I have no friend to expect in my daughter;" she angrily observed.

"Oh yes—you have—you have!"—exclaimed the sobbing Matilda: and taking her mother's hand, she pressed it to her lips.

Mrs. Belgrave was a little affected by this action; and proceeded to evince it by repeating her assurances to Matilda, that this marriage would be the means of augmenting their mutual happiness.

"Do but reflect, Matilda," she said, "upon the advantages of the connexion:" and she proceeded to specify them—"the barouche—the seat at Wimbledon—the town house, &c. &c."—for whether she considered Matilda as too much of a child to have any penetration into motives, or as too powerless to

urn it against her, she never acted a part with her laughter any more than as she acted it to herself. She had taken quite as much pains to persuade herself that she married for the benefit of Matilda, as she had bestowed upon impressing it on Matilda's own mind;—and in fact, she had succeeded much better in imposing upon herself than on her daughter; who was not to be inveigled into believing that her mother, with such a husband as Mr. Belgrave appeared to her likely to be, could be compensated by a barouche, or a house at Wimbledon, or any other house in any part of the world.

Not to damp, however, the felicity of her prospects, she compelled herself to seem to acquiesce in what Mrs. Belgrave advanced; and labouring for calmness, she very sincerely wished her health and happiness. She extended her congratulations to her new father, and all parties separated amicably; the bride to place herself with much satisfaction in her new carriage, and Matilda to give vent to her painfully suppressed feelings.

She was now nearly seventeen, an age when her understanding was sufficiently formed to enable her to comprehend the consequences of the step her mother had taken, as they were likely to affect herself. But without claiming for her any superlative magnanimity, it may truly be asserted, that her regret upon this occasion sprung not so much from the change she anticipated in her own comforts—for they had never been of a character to be much diminished by any alteration in her circumstances—as from the fond, the reverential recollection of him, to whom Mr. Belgrave had just been appointed a successor.

She could not help thinking of the lines she had

heard Mr. St. Aubyn so eloquently pronounce, when he was reading the play of Hamlet to her and his mother a few nights before:

"Hyperion" and a "Satyr" were ideas that she struggled with as long as she could; but finding she could not resist them, she took down the volume, and read the passage, and learnt it off by heart, and repeated it once or twice; and though she condemned herself as very wrong, it acted rather as a soothing medicine upon her mind.

She then went down to spend part of the *time of* her mother's absence with Mrs. St. Aubyn and her son, whom her father had in his will appointed his executor, and joint guardian with her mother to Matilda. This last office was of course *scarcely* more than a nominal one: Mrs. Belgrave, *though ill* executing the duties of a mother, being too jealous of authority to permit any interference in what she conceived to be her particular province, the education and protection of her daughter. Nor was it the design of Mr. Grey, in thus disposing of matters, to cause her any disturbance upon this point. His acquaintance with Mr. St. Aubyn, which had originated in his occasional residence at Wimbledon, had given to him, as he conceived, a friend of the most upright principles of conduct; one whose gentle temper fitted him to yield as much as, for the sake of peace and comfort, it would be desirable to do Mrs. Grey's caprices; and yet of too honourable a mind to bend to any thing which she might propose inconsistent with the interest of Matilda.

The other portion of Matilda's holidays (as they might truly be termed in her mother's absence) was spent at Brighton, whither she accompanied a fami-

ly with whom she was intimate. It was during this visit that she became acquainted with a gentleman of the name of Harcourt.

Charles Harcourt was young and handsome, and calculated beyond a doubt to succeed in pleasing any girl whom he thought it worth while to please. Sprightly and good humoured, no woman could pass half an hour in his company, without deciding upon his being one of the most agreeable of men. He soon distinguished Matilda with marked attention; he talked of love, and finally was, with all the hesitation which marked her diffident character, *conditionally* accepted. Doubtful of the propriety of her own conduct, in taking this important step, half doubtful, though willing enough from attachment to confide in the stability of Charles, and dreading her mother's anger at the whole business, Matilda, with a discretion not often found in girls of her age, refused to hear any thing upon bringing the matter to the conclusion of matrimony, till he had finished his university education; and in the interim, she restricted their intercourse to such meetings as should casually occur at the house of the Willetts (the family who first introduced them to each other,) and to occasional correspondence, as opportunity served. In this manner the affair had been for two years carried on, and Charles, having finished his career at college, being totally independent, and his minority having ended, was now upon the point of coming down to Wimbledon to claim his bride elect, and be introduced in the character of her lover to Mr. and Mrs. Belgrave, to whom as general visitor he was already known, in consequence of the summer's residence of his guardian, Mr. Willett, being at Wimbledon.

Such is a general outline of the statement Matilda had to make to Mrs. St. Aubyn, and through her, as a mark of due respect to him, to her guardian. To detail the variety of different emotions which flitted over the still sensitive mind of Catherine, as she listened to it, would be a vain attempt. Disappointment at the loss she herself was to sustain, in the society of one she loved as a daughter, she *could* perhaps restrain from expressing in any manner calculated to damp Matilda's modest pleasure in her views and prospects. But there was a disappointment of another kind, which with pain and struggle she laboured to conceal. The victim of visions, she had not lived without forming some for Matilda; and to view them thus suddenly overclouded, she knew not how to bear without repining. But after suffering, as we have seen, for the greater part of her life, from the mistake of being guided by impulse, Catherine, in the fifty-second year of her age, was beginning to learn wisdom—the wisdom of self-command. She never with more difficulty exerted it, than when she imprinted a kiss of congratulation on Matilda's cheek, and uttered the words, "I rejoice in your happiness my love; accept my best wishes." She would have added, "I am sure you will receive Edmund's as soon as this is made known to him;" but these were words she could not pronounce.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE present situation of Matilda (who resided with her mother) was not one of much comfort, though diversified with the great and important advantages of the Wimbledon and town house, &c. &c.

It is true, since her mother's second marriage she had occasionally rode out in a carriage, and saw a great deal of company; but the habits and temper of Mr. Belgrave were not such as to promote the happiness of those about him. His wife, perhaps, was as happy as any of his dependents: because, she placed her felicity in such things as Mr. Belgrave imagined it was equally for his own credit as hers that she should possess. Dress and trinkets increased the power of her beauty, and while they bespoke wealth, displayed his consequence as well as her own; and thus, in a round of fine clothes and fashion, two years of her union had passed away; at the end of which time, the addition of two children to his establishment, and the prospect of more, induced Mr. Belgrave to turn a more affable countenance upon his daughter-in-law, in the expectation that she would serve as a substitute for a governess to his rising family, and thus requite him for a protection, which, till the birth of the two little girls, he had somewhat grudgingly afforded her; and Matilda, pleased with occupying herself in any manner that could preclude thought, and suggest a satisfactory sentiment of use-

fulness, had found her chief pleasure in the care and attention she bestowed upon the children.

Amongst the few comforts that fate had allotted her, a mother's love could certainly not be enumemerated. Too attentive to the elegancies of good breeding, to suffer her features to be disturbed by passion openly expressed, it was only by the coolness, and sometimes the disdain of her demeanour, that Matilda painfully remarked, how she was every day becoming more and more the object of her mother's avoidance. Very often she wearied and perplexed her mind, till the powers of thought were lost in endeavouring to discover the meaning of this behaviour: but that was a discovery which she could not well make.

Vanity, she had been obliged to perceive, was the prevailing passion in her mother's mind; but that vanity should have the power to render her jealous of her own child, was a conclusion to which no kind of reasoning could ever have brought her. She studied not to see the instances of unkindness which too often were accumulated upon her, when her exquisite beauty, now in all the bloom of nineteen, drew upon her the attention which Mrs. Belgrave conceived to belong more justly to herself. And when these indications of dissatisfaction were too pointed to be overlooked, she restrained the momentary pang of resentment, by persuading herself that her reserve and diffident manners might wear to her mother, the appearance of that awkwardness and vulgarity with which she reproached her. But, with all the disadvantages which Mrs. Belgrave took pains to persuade her daughter that she possessed, there were

not wanting, amongst the visitors at Wimbledon, those who saw the greatest attractions in Matilda. Those periods of the year when they were in the country, and consequently had generally a house full of company (Mr. and Mrs. Belgrave being too fashionable to endure being left to themselves,) Matilda had remarked invariably to bring an accession of estrangement in her mother's manner towards her.

She learnt to dread the arrival of guests, though she could not tell why, for she generally found herself treated with a distinction by strangers, which she was not much in the habit of receiving from her domestic connexions. But, doomed from her earliest years to have her inclinations crossed, Mrs. Belgrave being a proficient in the art of ingeniously tormenting, Matilda insensibly acquired a habit of yielding to circumstances—an acquisition which is, beyond question, of inestimable value to every one, but absolutely essential to the tolerable comfort of women, in whose destiny it is ordained that submission should be the leading characteristic.

She felt it to be unfortunate for the disclosure she had to make to Mrs. Belgrave respecting her engagement, that her mother was now in that alienated state towards her, which she had observed to occur in a greater degree than usual, when, as was the case at present, the house was crowded with guests; nevertheless, as it was a point of duty to make a communication, which in any case would have been affecting, but in her peculiar circumstances was little less than distressing, she prepared herself on the day following her interview with Mrs. St. Aubyn, to open her heart to her mother. The want of sympathy which from her earliest years had existed between

them, rendered their intercourse so reserved, that it was always more or less of a trial to the feelings of Matilda, to have to solicit Mrs. Belgrave's attention in any manner to herself.

She felt that she was neither properly valued, nor even understood by her mother; for, without being in the slightest degree to be called vain, she could not but be aware that the neglect in which she was held, was as undeserved as it was unnatural. Sometimes, indeed, she reproached herself for not being more open on her side, and bringing before her mother's notice the talents and accomplishments she possessed; but, timid and retiring before every one, she was so in a tenfold degree in the presence of Mrs. Belgrave; and sometimes, in the candour of her heart, she could almost allow that her behaviour gave some colour of justice to the accusations of stupidity which were so often levelled against her.

But right or wrong, her timidity and reserve upon the subject of her own pretensions was perfectly unconquerable.

It is curious, indeed, to remark with what delicacy the mind guards its acquirements, from persons whose coldness prevents them from sympathising with, or appreciating them properly; and herein, perhaps, lies the touchstone of their genuineness. Bold pretenders to talent have not this jealous fear; to such beings the acquisitions of the mind are not valuable for their own sake, but as the means of giving their possessor consequence with others; and are therefore drawn forth on every occasion, without delicacy or discrimination. But it is not thus with the child of genius—the being whom God and nature have truly distinguished! He shrinks from obser-

vation! like a miser, he hoards up his treasures—they are his consolation in secret; and it is only when he knows exactly how far he is likely to be valued and understood, that he ventures to make known the riches he possesses and enjoys.

Propitious to Matilda's wishes, the house was cleared (with the exception of Mrs. Belgrave) very soon after breakfast, by all the guests ,who rode out to view the house and grounds of a nobleman at some miles distance.

For more than an hour after she had seen the party leave the house, Matilda remained in her own apartment, a prey to emotions which in vain she strove to resist. She turned with indescribable sorrow to the remembrance of her father. She grieved to think that in the most awful circumstances of her life, when her earthly fate was to be sealed by the irrevocable tie she was about to form, he who would have sanctified the union with his blessing, he whose tenderness would have vented itself in prayers for her happiness, and affectionate counsel, and the fondest interest, such as parents only feel—he was gone—his voice was silent—his heart was cold—he could utter no benediction, no prayer, for his poor Matilda—he could imprint no kiss upon her cheek, no token of endearment!

"And I shall go to the altar," she sorrowfully exclaimed, "unblessed by father or by mother!"

"Yet not so—not so," she repeated with quickness, rousing herself from the short indulgence she had given to despair; "I go with a heart fixed to perform its duties: and He who accepts the resolve of virtue will hallow it, and bless me."

No more indulgence to emotion! She was ready

now for all that was to be done on her part; and descending to her mother's boudoir, in which, when not engaged in company, the principal part of Mrs. Belgrave's time was passed, she knocked gently at the door.

"Is that you, Granger?" inquired a voice within.

"No, mamma, it is I—may I come in?" and she made her appearance with much doubt and hesitation, anticipating from her mother's question that some toilette council was about to be held, in which case she was well aware her visit would have been ill timed.

But Mrs. Belgrave was apparently quite disengaged from the more important affairs of her existence, and from slight indisposition (it being seldom that any other cause produced such an effect,) was occupied with a book.

So unusual was it for Matilda to intrude upon her privacy without any ostensible cause, that having waited a few moments, expecting to hear the occasion of her visit, Mrs. Belgrave, finding she did not speak, inquired if any thing was the matter with the children.

Matilda replied in the negative, and was again silent, walking to the window, and revolving in what possible manner to introduce the subject of her thoughts, whilst her mother resumed her book.

"Oh, that my mother were but what most mothers are!" she thought; "then there would be no need of this difficulty—this dread; but surely, surely, the fault is mine—I have never touched her affections—I have never thrown myself upon her love—perhaps the fault is mine!" And as she thus reasoned with, and accused herself, a stream of tender feeling rush-

ed upon her heart, and she turned to look upon her mother, as if she, for the first time, gazed upon a parent.

Her personal beauty, though past its meridian, was still such as few could contemplate without admiration. She was at the present moment as placid as she was lovely; either her book or her own thoughts pleased her, and pervaded her exquisite features with a smile.

"How beautiful she is?" thought Matilda; "what wonder that the homage those attractions have received, should have done such destroying work in the mind! Ah, who is there amongst us that can bear distinction—dangerous distinction!"

She glided on still nearer and nearer, unperceived by Mrs. Belgrave—She stood behind her, yet unnoticed. At last, incapable of any longer keeping silence, she bent down, and just touching her mother's hand, shrinking as she did so, from a fear of offending, she uttered the word "mother!"

Mrs. Belgrave started with surprise, and looking at her daughter's agitated face, she was struck with sudden alarm that something unfortunate had occurred. "What is the matter?" she once or twice repeated: "Mr. Belgrave—the children—what is the matter?"

"They are well—it is I only"—she paused.

"You, Matilda!—why, what ails you? are you ill?"

"No—no."

"Then what *can* be the meaning of this strange behaviour? You frighten me out of my senses!" And Mrs. Belgrave spoke as persons generally do when they conceive themselves unnecessarily alarmed.

"I am very foolish—very—much to blame."

Matilda turned away a moment or two, to strive against her tears, which, at her mother's angry manner, had risen to her eyes.

But Mrs. Belgrave, though a vain and selfish woman, was not wholly inaccessible to the pleadings of nature. She saw before her, her child—her useful good child (for such in her heart she could not but consider Matilda,) she saw her in distress, and with some affection and interest she took her hand, and asked the cause of her uneasiness. It was then that emotion wholly triumphed in the bosom of Matilda! The voice of her mother speaking to her with tenderness!—an endearment from her mother! She seemed, for the first time in her life, to have caught a distinct conception of what a mother was; and with repeated kisses upon the hand she held, she testified how dearly she appreciated the sacred tie.

"I will tell you all, mamma. I have a great deal to tell you—presently."

"Compose yourself, Matilda—sit down, love!" and Mrs. Belgrave, still retaining her daughter's hand, constrained her to take a seat by her on the sofa, while she waited in silence till Matilda had sufficiently recovered to speak intelligibly.

Her little narrative was soon told; much sooner than the sentiments to which it gave birth in her hearer.

Mrs. Belgrave was all astonishment, anger, delight, and dismay—for each feeling predominated in turn. She was astonished that the matter could have been carried on so quietly; and, though she did not own it, she wondered beyond measure that Matilda's exultation, in possessing a lover, had not betrayed it-

self in some shape or other during so long an engagement. She was, as might be expected, exceedingly angry to find she had not been sooner consulted in the business; and Matilda's simple and candid representation of the doubt she herself entertained of the stability of Mr. Harcourt's attachment and intentions, and her consequent unwillingness to speak of an affair which might terminate in nothing, was heard for some time without any effect.

The force of truth at length prevailed, and Mrs. Belgrave admitted, that, in not knowing any thing of the matter, till it was in a fairer way of being brought to a conclusion, she had been spared the uneasiness which must have attended the subject while it was accompanied with doubts and suspense.

From what she had seen of Mr. Harcourt in his transient visits with the Willetts, he was every thing in person and manner that could be desired. The particulars she had heard of his fortune were also, from what she remembered of them, and from what Matilda told her, quite satisfactory.

But if a prince had come to Wimbledon to demand Matilda for his wife (a circumstance which to Mrs. Belgrave's imagination would have offered as strong a realization of heaven and happiness as she could conceive) she could not have surrendered up her daughter without regret; for now she was aware of all she had to lose, in this hitherto neglected, unvalued girl.

"It certainly will be a very good connexion for you, Matilda," said she, after a short rumination; "and indeed, my dear, I wish you happy. But I cannot imagine what I shall do without you—and

now Fanny is getting on so nicely! It will be a great loss."

Matilda spoke of her increasing interest in her sister's fate, with so much affection and sincerity, that Mrs. Belgrave's heart was softened to a degree beyond what it had ever been before.

Still it was only a passing emotion of tenderness, little corresponding in kind or degree to the deep, impassioned feeling which, however subjugated it had been to the yoke of reason and necessity, was the predominant characteristic of Matilda, when circumstances unexpectedly and strongly excited it.

So little had she imagined the possibility of kindness from her mother, of a congratulation or a tender wish, that when Mrs. Belgrave replied to her assurances of continued interest in her family, by telling her that "she was a good girl—and you always have been, Matilda—I will say that for you—you always have been a very great comfort to me," kissing her as she spoke—the poor girl wholly overpowered, threw her arms round her mother's neck, and for some minutes sobbed as if her heart would break.

This was carrying sensibility to a degree which Mrs. Belgrave could, by no effort of understanding, comprehend.

"Good gracious, Matilda! something must be upon your mind!" and looking forward to all the anxious circumstances of her case, in the same point of view in which they would have, and, in her own two instances, *had* affected herself, Mrs. Belgrave believed she saw at once the whole of the embarassment and distress.

"You are thinking, my dear, I dare say, about

your clothes, and the great expense of fitting out properly for marriage; but don't let that make you uncomfortable, for I will—"

Matilda did not require this injunction to be repeated. Without listening to the conclusion of her mother's speech, which contained a promise of speaking to her guardian to induce him to advance a handsome sum for this most important purpose of wedlock, she raised her head from Mrs. Belgrave's shoulder, and with a sigh that could scarcely be disjoined from a smile, assured her that no ideas of this kind occasioned her any uneasiness.

"Then, what is it that makes you so unhappy?"

Matilda hesitated a little before she spoke. At last, "under the most prosperous circumstances," she said, "there is sufficient cause for anxiety in the event to which I look forward."

Mrs. Belgrave, probably, from the advantage of her double experience, had grown somewhat callous to the anxiety of which Matilda spoke, for she remarked that she considered her "as particularly fortunate, with your small fortune, my dear Matilda, to be so early, and so well established; and as to anxiety, God knows, I have had enough anxiety in my time!" and she sighed, though why or wherefore, it would have been difficult to say, for few ladies had accomplished their designs with less destruction of nerve and sensibility than Mrs. Belgrave; her anxieties having been principally of the sort which money had the power to relieve.

"But you see I have surmounted it all," she said, "and I am now as happy"—she paused a little—for a simile, perhaps, or from a difficulty of conveying to her daughter a correct idea of her bliss.

Matilda had now composed her agitation, at least sufficiently to make suitable replies to her mother's succeeding remarks, which, as they were no otherwise striking than as they illustrated the infirm, and unfortunately, predominant parts of that lady's character, we shall altogether suppress.

"Oh, my poor mother!" was Matilda's sighing reflection, as, the conference ended, she retired to her own room.

CHAPTER XV.

The discomfort of Matilda's domestic circumstances since her mother's marriage, though submitted to, on her part, with the most patient resignation, could not be unknown to either Mrs. St. Aubyn or her son; nor did it fail to excite in the hearts of both of them that tender interest which, independently of her early trials in the school of adversity, it was scarcely possible to withhold from her; so gentle, so modest, so truly feminine and attractive, both in person and character, was Matilda Grey.

If, in her soft and quiet manner, she had insensibly stolen the almost maternal love of Mrs. St. Aubyn, it will not occasion surprise to learn, that she had totally, though, in truth, most unconsciously, made her own, the all of attachment that St. Aubyn had to give. Left under his guardianship at an age when she was still a child, he had, for a long time, been sheltered from the apprehension of any danger in their connexion, by persuading himself that he loved

her only as he would have done a daughter of his own. That Matilda felt towards him the affection and respect due to a parent, she openly professed; a thought beyond this, had certainly never entered her simple imagination; and it had latterly been a grief, which had caused her some tears, to perceive occasionally, a restraint in the manner of her guardian towards her, and to observe his behaviour sometimes so different from what it used to be, and, to her, so wholly unaccountable.

But, before the circumstance of which Mrs. St. Aubyn now had to inform him, of his ward's engagement, Edmund had detected the state of his own heart—detected it with grief! The careless, unembarassed conduct of Matilda, and the same open avowal of affection for him which she had always made, sufficiently testified, that, to her, he could be nothing more than what he had ever been—her guardian and her tutor—for almost all that she had gathered of mental information and accomplishment, and it was not trifling, it had been his delightful occupation to impart.

If he had been deputed to pourtray the being, who most assimilated with his conception of the *beau idéal* in woman, Matilda would have been his model, his own mind so particularly blended with the kind of attractions hers possessed. He too was gentle, delicate, refined, but still endowed with strong affections, chastened however by a holy principle of religion which, early implanted, and still sedulously cherished, was the predominant rule of all his actions. Unlike his mother, he had not yielded to the world's temptations—he had not forgotten his early friend. Though not *quite* a convert to all her opinions, he

still leaned very far towards adopting the peculiar doctrines of his friend Ann Morton, with whom he still corresponded, and whom, once in every year, he made it as much a point of pleasure, as of duty, to visit.

But, with all the fortification of religious principle, with all the aid of an uncommonly clear and well judging mind, with strong self command in disguising emotion, the intelligence Mrs. St. Aubyn communicated respecting Matilda, (though she had previously prepared him to receive it, by telling him all she had heard rumoured of it in London) affected him to a degree he could not conceal. Catherine much more than suspected the growing attachment of her son for his ward; but the name of Matilda had never been mentioned betweeen them with any reference to such a supposition. St. Aubyn had concealed his own secret, as a man of sense might be expected to conceal what, he possibly imagined, it would not redound to the credit of his understanding to disclose. There is a delicacy in genuine attachment, which recoils from being discussed. Men, more particularly, from the superior strength of their minds, disguise as much as possible, even from themselves how far they may be subjugated to the dominion of love; and even women are generally unwilling, to the most friendly ear, to speak of those fond illusions in which the dream of life is passing away.

Yet, when all was made but too certain by this startling intelligence, when Matilda's own lips had confirmed it, and his mother he found was commissioned by her to communicate it to him—nature was not quite to be repelled.

He leaned his head upon his hand, as he sat at the table, and for a few moments he said nothing.

Catherine did not immediately interrupt him; but when, intently watching him, she saw the hand which concealed his face slightly drawn over his downcast eyes—

"Edmund," she said; and laid her hand on his—"my dear son!"

He pressed her hand, but said nothing; and perceiving him about to rise as if to quit the room, she too, left her seat, and preventing him from pursuing his intention by still retaining his hand, "Have you no confidence in me, Edmund?" she said.

He turned his agitated countenance upon her, and struggling for a smile, "I will have confidence in you, my dearest mother," he said; "I was weak—I was self-deluded—I suffered myself to love her! Do I not merit disappointment and suffering?"

"No, no—you merit nothing but happiness. I cannot bear that you should suffer—I cannot bear"—

"But *I* must bear it, dear mother!" said he interrupting her vehemence with a genuine smile. "But I will be candid with you; I will tell you what I *cannot* bear, I cannot bear to reflect upon my own folly, or to think how easily a man who was certainly *old* enough to know better, has acted unwisely. In pity, therefore, to my pride, let us pass this matter over as gently as we can; and when we speak of Matilda, let it only be with reference to her as the betrothed of another. I shall do very well—never fear!" and again pressing her hand—he was gone.

When next they met, St. Aubyn was apparently the same as usual, though his mother was sunk in dejection. The following evening they had been in-

vited to spend at Belgrave Park (as it was the will of the owner that it should be called,) and so totally had Catherine yielded to *her* feelings of disappointment, and, as *she* supposed so entirely incapable would Edmund be of supporting such a visit, that she expected with much satisfaction to hear him propose their excusing themselves from keeping the engagement.

But, on the contrary, perceiving no preparation of dress on her side, he inquired at dinner that day, with some surprise, if she were not going to the Park in the evening?

"I thought, my dear, you would not wish it, and I am sure I do not; for the Belgraves are silly enough of themselves; and now they have got an acquisition of folly in their visitors, those Courtenays—and that Mr. Somers"—

"Oh, never mind," he replied, laughing; "we have nothing to do with their folly; we accepted the invitation, and I see no reason for declining it now. Besides, I want to see Matilda—I have not spoken to her about this matter—*I* must go."

"Well, then, we will go," she replied, though much astonished at the calmness with which he talked of it.

On arriving at the Park, they found the drawing-room in a state of great commotion. In addition to the family party of Mr. and Mrs. Belgrave and Matilda, there were then assembled, the two Miss Courtnays and their brother, and a Mr. Somers, guests who were staying in the house; and a Mr. Willett, and his two daughters, summer residents at Wimbledon, and at the present moment visitors for the day to Mrs. Belgrave.

The cause of the clamour and confusion which reigned in the room, at the entrance of Mrs. St. Aubyn and her son, was briefly this: Mr. Somers was an amateur poet; and, according to his own account, in high acceptation with divers lords and ladies, whom he numbered amongst his intimates; and to whom, as occasion offered, he addressed civil speeches and polite verses.

Soon after the gentlemen had joined the ladies in the drawing room, after dinner, he had found himself situated amongst the two Miss Willetts and Matilda, and the youngest Miss Courtenay; and conceiving it altogether a favourable moment, he took a manuscript from his pocket, and thus opened his case, addressing himself to Matilda:—

"I can assure you, Miss Grey, it is not every lady I consult on these little delicate matters of elegant literature." At which exordium the other young ladies drew their chairs still nearer, till, as he said, he was "encompassed in a fairy ring;" and at their clamorous intreaties he proceeded. "My very particular friend, the Duchess of Bellamour, has just" —and he took up the manuscript—"presented his Grace with a son and heir: and, I know—in fact"—and he looked important—"I have been given to understand, that some little memorial from my muse will be expected on the occasion."

Matilda gave a bow of acquiescence, and Emma Courtenay looked at him with a complacency which indicated that he had risen cent. per cent. in her estimation, since he numbered the Duchess of Bellamour amongst his particular friends.

"I have, therefore," he continued, "in my careless, unstudied manner, thrown together a few ideas,

which may be altogether new; and you must imagine, Miss Grey—you can comprehend, Miss Courtenay—the difficulty of striking out any thing original upon such a theme. But, if you will permit me," he proceeded, "I will read you a part of the poem;" and he was just about to begin, when the servant announced the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. St. Aubyn. Matilda, forgetting both poetry and poet, started from her seat, and flew to meet them.

"Humph!" was the mental observation of Mr. Somers, "she might, at the least have said that she was sorry for the interruption;" and he began to gather up his effusions, as if he intended to give them no further utterance. But against such a degree of obduracy on his part, the young ladies vociferated so loudly, that all the rest of the party advanced towards the part of the room they occupied, to ascertain the cause of this clamour.

"The Duchess of Bellamour—birth of a son—Mr. Somers had been writing such charming verses!" and thus the matter being made out, all the rest of the company, including Mrs. St. Aubyn and her son, united their intreaties that the business might proceed; and Mr. Somers, after a little coquettish delay, a preliminary cough, and a portentous pause, thus began:—

> "The stars are in the Heavens met,
> And in the ———"

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed Mrs. St. Aubyn, who, at her advanced period of life, had not yet learned to check the suggestion of thought from finding its way to her lips, "but, no—no, pray proceed," she added, catching at the same instant the reprov-

ing glance of Edmund, and the stare of astonishment of the poet. "Pray proceed—I beg your pardon," she said, "a thought occurred to me that I had heard that line before, but probably you mean to begin with a quotation."

"A quotation, Mrs. St. Aubyn!" he repeated, "from whom?—from what?—I confess I am not aware of any!" and he looked very much as if he would have added, "this is only your confounded satirical temper—oh I wish!"—and we dare not say what he wished to the unfortunate Catherine, whose shrewd remarks had, upon former occasions, rendered her especially an object of disfavour in his eyes.

She again intreated him to proceed, with so much genuine good humour and sweetness, that he resumed his MS., and once more,

"The stars were in the Heavens met"—

but to as little purpose as before, and now they were threatened with permanent dispersion by the arrival of Mr. Courtenay, who had just entered the room, and who was an object of the most perfect abhorrence to the muse of Mr. Somers. Having nodded to the visiters, he perceived the blotted transcript which Mr. Somers held in his hand.

This was starting game quite unexpectedly; and, with much the same sort of cry he would have sent after a hare, he recognised it, and begged to know if he was come time enough for the sport?

"Fortunately in time to prevent my making any," replied Mr. Somers, trying to laugh and look good humoured, but once more preparing to deposit the MS. in his pocket and retire.

"Oh, let us beseech you, Mr. Somers," and "pray dont," and "pray do," were the various cries of the ladies, whilst Mr. Courtenay was requesting alternately the Miss Willetts and Matilda to tell him for what they so clamorously intreated.

On being informed, he, as the poor poet anticipated he would, threw cold water, at once, upon the blazing fire of his genius, and extinguished as much of it as could be put out by so insignificant a person, by gravely beseeching him not to expend the smallest portion of his time and thought in such an enterprise. "I know the Duke better than any body in the world, perhaps," he continued, "we were rather thick together at college. Take my advice, send him a bank note to buy the boy a coral; he will like it better than any thing else you can send him, believe me. Though, to be sure," he added after a short pause, "a draft upon a house in Lombard Street, is not always so easily honoured as a call upon the firm in Parnassus."

"You seem so much *au fait* at these matters," replied Mr. Somers, with an ironical smile, "that one would be tempted to think you had passed some little time in a counting house."

"Aye, and a monstrous good place too, to spend time in. I am always proud of the counting house, I'll be hanged if I'm not;" and he appeared most stoutly determined not to be disconcered by the sneer which had been levelled against him, in his mercantile capacity.

Though the semblance of raillery and good humour was attempted to be maintained, there was rather too much latent hostility beginning to appear, to render their repartee quite agreeable to themselves

or their audience; and every body was very well pleased when Mrs. Belgrave put an end to it, by proposing to Mr. Somers (who was now inflexible in refusing the ode,) to make one at a card table.

In the course of a little time, most of the party were amicably disposed of, the young ladies round the piano-forte, and the elder people at cards.

St. Aubyn found it not so easy as he expected, to catch a favourable moment for offering his congratulations (if such they might be called) to Matilda. He was himself much too attractive, to be spared by the young ladies, in their present dearth of beaux. Indeed, there were few circles in which a man so elegant and accomplished, both in person and mind, could easily have been pointed out. He was soon entrapped to the piano forte by the Miss Courtenays; and as he was known to be a very tasteful vocal performer, requested so earnestly to oblige them, that he had scarcely any alternative but to comply.

He turned instinctively, as it were, to Matilda, to direct him what to sing; and on her whispered reply, he struck the chords of Handel's sweeet air in Sampson,

"How willing my paternal love,"

There was something in the situation and character of St. Aubyn, which, to Matilda's fancy, peculiarly assimilated with this affecting song. The tender love he bore his mother—the sacrifice of time and talents which he was making for her comfort—the manly feeling and sense with which he shielded her enthusiastic character from the error and suffer-

ing into which, in a state of desolation, the eccentricities of genius woud too surely have betrayed it—the truth—the virtue of his disposition she could imagine to breathe forth in every note—and though without a ray of passion in her affection for him, the tender thoughts his performance awakened in her mind, so powerfully affected her, that, before he concluded, she had stolen unperceived to the window to hide her tears.

Scarcely had she departed, when St. Aubyn missed her gentle sigh of approbation, to him, the sweetest incense of praise, and ill exchanged for the unmeaning plaudits with which the Miss Courtenays overwhelmed his performance. His eye quickly sought and discovered the part of the room to which she had retreated; but still he found it impossible to escape and join her: for now he had to play the part of auditor, while the young ladies in their turn exhibited.

This trial of his patience lasted a very long time. At length it was concluded, and at the same moment Mr. Somers being released from the card table, and approaching the piano, he hailed him in his heart, as a general on the point of defeat views a party coming to his unexpected relief, and made his way to the window which Matilda still occupied.

She greeted him with a smile, but looked and felt embarrassed. She knew the subject to which he *must* allude, and her delicacy naturally shrunk from it. But St. Aubyn did not immediately approach it; for, to him indeed it was a subject not only of shrinking—but of recoil.

"We met yesterday on a lovely day, Matilda,"

said he. "I think we are fortunate, for this appears as beautiful a night. Are you afraid of taking a turn in the viranda?"

"Oh! not the least;" she replied, taking his offered arm,—"a moonlight walk will be quite refreshing after the noise and heat of this room."

"Ah! it is very sweet," he said, as they came out into the clear soft moonlight, "it is very sweet, indeed!"

It was the hour of nature's stillness and repose—when turbulent thoughts and restless emotions seem to fade with the decline of day—it was the hour which the votary of impassioned feeling most loves; for then it is, that all without assimilates with all within. The features of the landscape melting into shade—the gradual strengthening of the pale moonbeams—these images of peace are dear to the wounded heart; they offer the interval from suffering for which it sighs—they inspire resignation.

For some moments after they came out, St. Aubyn was silent; and Matilda, as she hung upon his arm, waited with an anxiety that almost made her tremble for the result of what she supposed to be his deliberations, respecting the choice she had made—or the manner in which he was to express his opinion of it. Finding he did not speak, she ventured with much hesitation to say—"You have heard, perhaps"—

"Yes—my dear Matilda;" he replied, before she could add more, "I have heard of your present situation—with interest—I cannot tell you how sincere—how tender"—his voice a little faltered; but soon recovering—"accept my best wishes!" he added,

"their truth and fervour you cannot doubt; for never can you doubt my friendship for you!"

"Oh never—never!" she replied with energy, "dear, good Mr. St. Aubyn, still let me hope for your kindness—my fate will be but half happy, if you do not still feel for me the same friendship—the same attachment!"—and, as she spoke, in the innocence of her heart, she took his hand, and half raised it to her lips.

The agitation of St. Aubyn became almost visible —"Oh! Matilda—I can—never see you more"—he had half articulated, but he restrained the words—and gently releasing his hand, "My friendship, and my affection, ever must be yours!" he said, "now —tell me—as if you were speaking to a father—tell me, my dear, the views and plans of Mr. Harcourt?" —and then, as if his painful part were over, he relapsed into silence, and the twilight concealing his features, Matilda observed nothing of the harrowing struggle with which he was commanding his emotions.

"Charles," she said, "had a very handsome fortune, but intended to follow the study of the law, for the sake of having something to do. He had taken a house for the present in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. As to her marriage settlements, and every thing that related to her, it was his intention, by her particular desire, to wait upon Mr. St. Aubyn early in the next week, in company with Mr. Willett, his guardian."

St. Aubyn sighed so deeply on hearing this, that Matilda almost started:—"I fear you are not well!" she said.

"Quite well, my dear; I am deeply interested in all you say—pray go on."

"I have little more to say," she replied; "only to hope that in this matter, I have not acted so as to incur your displeasure."

"My displeasure, Matilda!"—and he looked at her with unspeakable tenderness, "it would be difficult, I believe, for you to do any thing to displease me. In taking your society from me—you may give me—and my mother," he added, after a little pause, "some pain, perhaps, but we could not expect always to retain it. May those to whom you resign such a treasure, value it, as much as we do!"

"I prepare myself for trials," said Matilda, "such, in some degree, must be the portion of every one; in the happiest state, we must have something to endure—and to struggle with."

"Ah, how much must we struggle with," he replied, "how much must we struggle with, to support life with propriety, or even with patience! A principle of resistance must be for ever acting within the soul, and from one end of existence to the other it is nothing but a perpetual conflict.

"But the end is the crown and glory!" he continued, looking upwards with a smile of sublime emotion; "there all mystery is solved—there the sufferers of this world receive their portion! Oh! Matilda—in every circumstance of life, adverse or prosperous, still think of that! Still bear the end in view, and though denied"—he faltered—he could not, he dared not proceed—for, unconsciously, the thought which passed across his mind, had well nigh told itself in words—that though denied her love in this world, he might still hope to dwell with her in realms beyond the sky.

"I am sure something peculiarly affects you to-

night," Matilda could not forbear to say, as she marked his tremulous accents, his sudden pause.

"I believe I *am* in low spirits, my dear," he replied: "but I will walk round the grounds, and I will soon join you again;" and as he spoke he darted forward; and Matilda, with an anxious regret at his uneasiness, so inexplicable, but still so evident, returned to the drawing-room with but little disposition to join its inmates.

St. Aubyn, in the meanwhile, wandered on, endeavouring to soothe to peace his excited mind. In vain he tried to believe that time would wear away the charm with which the thought of Matilda had linked itself to his imagination. It was a charm which he identified in all that was beautiful—in all that he loved. In the summer's evening walk she was by his side! in the loveliness of nature her intelligent smile was mingled! Her voice was in the music of the birds; her tender feeling in the page of poetry; her piety and virtue in his serious books; her sweetness and her beauty—every where!

"And this must be resigned!" he said. "Oh! weak—weak that I was, not sooner to perceive my danger! It is fit that I should suffer, and I am content to do so." And as he spoke, he wiped from his cheek the tears which keen distress had wrung from a bosom, acutely delicate to feel, though strong and steadfast to endure.

In a short time Matilda perceived him enter the drawing-room with a composed demeanour, though nor without a shade of melancholy upon his brow, which it pained her to observe without the power to remove it.

He returned at the precise moment when his pre-

sence was necessary to compose a little feud which had started up in his absence, and in which he perceived from a glance at the countenance of his mother, she had been involved.

When the cards had been given up, the greater part of the company had been drawn towards a table upon which various books, albums, and other such matters were deposited.

"Now this is the sort of poetry," said young Courtenay, taking up a volume of 'Dr. Syntax's Tour,' "this is the sort of poetry that pleases me."

"So I should suppose," remarked Mr. Somers, in a tone of ineffable contempt.

"If poetry does but please," said Mrs. St. Aubyn, who in wandering down the room insensibly found herself included in the party round the table, "its object is answered."

"The method by which it is attained is not material, you would say," remarked Mr. Somers.

"In the present instance it would be scarcely worth inquiring into;" she spoke carelessly, and without any design of being sarcastic; but both gentlemen received an impression that such was her intention. Young Courtenay, indeed, had only a blundering conception of the kind, for he knew not exactly whether she spoke of the book or of him. But Mr. Somers had private reasons of his own for viewing every thing she said and did through the distorted medium in which a person, not quite assured of the soundness of his own pretensions, is prone to examine those of another, (especially if that other be a woman,) and with a malice which assumed politeness could not conceal, he remarked "that in every instance it would perhaps be for our happiness not to

analyse with too much precision the materials of which it is composed."

"But we were speaking of pleasure, not happiness," she replied.

"They may almost be considered as synonymous," said he.

"Surely not," she replied with a smile; "being pleased is a very different thing from being happy. I may be pleased with Dr. Syntax, that is, it may make me laugh, but it certainly does not make me happy."

"Pardon me, madam," and he bent to her with an ironical smile; but if I may hazard it as a *general* remark, I have observed in my intercourse with society, (which has not been very limited,) that the highest degree of happiness is sometimes found in a laugh. The principal felicity of some persons exists in turning every thing and every body into the ridiculous."

"It is fortunate then," she replied, "for such persons that they can generally command their own felicity. The world is very fertile in absurdity."

"Upon my word I think you are very adventurous in being so severe." said Mrs. Belgrave; "for my part, I am always in terror of hazarding the slightest remark. I declare I dare not have said what you have, before Mr. Somers, for all the world."

"Is he so terrible then?" and Mrs. St. Aubyn smiled. "Shall I be slaughtered in a copy of verses, or put to death in a magazine?"

"Your apprehensions appear so sensitive, ma'am, that I could almost imagine you had experienced some of the attacks you deprecate." He endeavour-

ed to affect pleasantry, but malice was rather too predominant.

Mrs. Belgrave was enchanted with this sally of wit. "Oh, what terrors do we ignorant, unlettered females escape?" she exclaimed; "I am happy in being one of them."

"Things are much more equally balanced in this world, than, at some moments, we can believe," said Mrs. St. Aubyn; not so perfectly calm as she could have wished, and as, in the exuberance of contempt which these efforts to mortify her excited, she felt she ought to be.

"You, for instance," she continued, addressing Mrs. Belgrave, "are happy in"—she did not say "your ignorance," but the manner in which she pronounced "your distaste to literature," conveyed nearly the same idea.

"My distaste to literature!" repeated Mrs. Belgrave; "that is very good, indeed!"

"I thought I understood you to insinuate something of the kind," said Mrs. St. Aubyn.

"I believe not—no one can be a greater admirer of literature than I am."

"Indeed!—then I beg your pardon for my mistake."

"Mrs. Belgrave only means to say!" observed Mr. Somers, "that she confines her taste for literature to those bounds which it is sometimes hazardous for ladies to pass," and again he smiled; "I merely speak in the most *general* manner, Mrs. St. Aubyn."

"She is wise," replied Catherine; "she escapes in so doing, not only the malignity with which such unfortunate ladies are watched, like poachers in a

preserved manor, but she escapes also the momentary irritation which that malignity is apt to excite. And really that is no small evil to avoid; for one may, without much effort, forgive mankind their little passions, but it is difficult to forgive oneself the humiliation of being affected by them;" and she walked away, not so much wounded by any assault that had been levelled at her, as pained that her indignation could not have been more indifferently expressed.

But no consciousness of superiority is sufficient to protect a woman against the attacks of envy. The desire of pleasing, and of being beloved, that tender instinct, which nature has made the most predominant of her emotions, renders her vulnerable on every side; and if she escapes mortification on the part of her pride, she is tolerably certain of suffering on that of her affections: for there are few distinctions that compensate to a female for the terror of being hated.

Her countenance was yet flushed with indignation when her son entered the room.

As soon as she perceived him, she summoned him to her, and declared an intention of returning home.

But the ladies so earnestly intreated him to favour them with another song, that he hesitated.

"Do as you like, Edmund," she said, "it is scarcely worth while though, I think."

"Oh, surely, if it will give any pleasure," said he, replying to the request of the Miss Courtenays; and endeavouring to cover, under the pleasing courtesy of his own manners, the too visible disdain of his mother's, he proceeded to the piano.

Some feelings of self-reproach passed across the mind of Catherine—feelings which, as soon as she

and her son left the house, and were on their way home, thus expressed themselves.

"I cannot think, my dear Edmund, by what effort you are able, amongst such very silly people as those we have just left behind, to say and do civil things; for I, on my part, have need of all the fortitude I can command, to keep myself from openly affronting them."

"I do it upon the same principle on which I endeavour, imperfectly indeed, but still to the best of my ability to do every thing—the principle of doing to others as I would they should do unto me."

"Ah, those are the only precepts for conduct!" said Catherine with a sigh; "and those who make them the guide of their life, are the only proper people. Can you conceive, Edmund, any thing more unsatisfactory to an immortal soul, than to pass its time with such people, with the exception of Matilda, as we have just left?"

"To me it is unsatisfactory, I certainly must confess," he replied, "and by choice I should not cast myself in their way; but being there, my dear mother, I would, upon Christian principles, make the best of it."

"Ah, Edmund, poor Ann Morton was right! She always told me that I could find no happiness amongst worldly people; and true enough it is, they are very unsatisfactory. Poor Ann!" and she sighed again.

"I think, Edmund," she continued, "the next time you go to see Ann, I will go with you."

"She will be delighted to see you," he replied, "and I hope you will keep your intention."

"I will—yes—I certainly will," she said, and thus their dialogue ended.

CHAPTER XVI.

When every thing was finally arranged for Matilda's marriage, Mr. St. Aubyn, avoiding a parting interview with her, accompanied a young man in whom he was interested in a few months' tour *to the Continent*: thus escaping, as far as he could, all participation in an event so painful to him. We must now introduce to our readers a person who has some part to play in the future pages of our history.

But as it is generally better to let *people speak for* themselves, we will suffer Mr. Harcourt to display his own character in his own way; and as it was of a kind exceedingly easy to fathom, a short scene, which occurred the week before his marriage with his intended bride, will enable them to form a tolerably correct judgment respecting it.

"My dearest little girl," said he, taking from his pocket a morocco case, "I have brought you, from Hamlet's the prettiest set of ornaments I could find: but they are not quite what I wished, either."

"My dear Charles! what could you be thinking of?" replied Matilda, almost ready to cry, as he displayed to her observation some jewels, which, in point of value and beauty, were fitter for a Duchess than a private gentlewoman; "you cannot have considered what our income is to be, and what sort of visiting we shall have the power of entering into."

"Visiting!" he replied, "why we shall visit eve-

body, to be sure! And do you think I would have my wife make an appearance inferior to any lady she may happen to be acquainted with, and such a wife too! No, Matty, you shall look like an angel as you are!"—a very energetic determination, which he sealed with a salute, to prevent her, as he said, from adding another word about the matter.

With this careless good humour, he arrested every species of advice which she would fain have offered to him; and she was too much disposed to view him in a favourable light, to doubt of his hereafter becoming more accessible to counsel, when experience had taught him prudence—a species of instruction which, she was aware, must be paid for, before it is valued, and which she believed Charles could afford to purchase, without any serious injury to his fortune.

The wedding day at length arrived, and at St. James's church, in London, Matilda was united to Charles Harcourt. Her heart was somewhat sad, that neither of the friends most dear to her were present on this occasion. Mr. St. Aubyn, we have already said, was absent by design; and his mother, after vibrating between a wish to oblige Matilda and an unwillingness to sanction any thing so melancholy to Edmund, at last declined it.

Of the happiness of Charles, young, generous, enthusiastic, and loving his bride with all the ardour which attaches to such a character, it is needless to attempt the delineation. It would be equally fruitless also to labour at conveying any notion of the felicity of Mrs. Belgrave, who, in the ecstacy of presiding and dictating, and finding in Charles Harcourt an ally ready to second every idea of expense

and shew, which could make the matter sufficiently magnificent for a paragraph in the Morning Post, could almost fancy she was celebrating for the third time her own nuptials. Again her imagination feasted upon once more seeing in print those magic characters, "*the charming Mrs. Belgrave,*" more delightful to her eye than black letter to the antiquary, or the titlepage of his first work to a young author: not a circumstance of the description she was to excite, escaped her imagination, "Attired with her accustomed elegance,—Brussels lace and white satin, —graceful simplicity,—scarcely to be distinguished from the bride, for whose sister, rather than mother, she might have passed," &c. &c. Herself and her own appointments were all that she saw in the business; but seeing them through the medium of extreme complacency, she was disposed also to view every thing else with satisfaction. She became so tender and affectionate towards Matilda, that when the latter took leave of her, after breakfast, to set off with her husband upon a bridal tour, she was able without effort to command a genuine tear, as she bid her farewel: an occurrence which, though she really at the moment felt too sincerely to calculate about, she turned to in recollection as infinitely valuable, inasmuch as it would enrich the paragraph, already so fertile in Brussels lace and beauty, with a slight sketch of her exquisite sensibility.

Mr. Belgrave also, being a prominent person in the drama of the day, giving away the bride, and giving a dinner, was likewise, in *his* way, important, and therefore pleased; and good Mr. Willett and his daughters, always being happy, were, of course, at a wedding, happier still.

A state of so much felicity, though extremely agreeable to those who experience it, is not altogether so attractive in description.

Fortunately, however, for the writers of such treatises as that which the reader now honours with a perusal, and for historians in general, the current of human life does not long run in one unbroken stream, more especially a stream of happiness. A year, and sometimes a much shorter period, presents a reverse of events; and, if not a reverse of events or a reverse of sentiment and opinion, something in the course of circumstances generally occurs to check that confidence in continuing enjoyment, without which interruption, so charming is existence, and so beautiful is the world, that erring humanity might well be forgiven for mistaking its destination, and desiring to find in so fair a dwelling place that "abiding city," which it is not permitted us to hope for here.

CHAPTER XVII.

Though we have conducted Matilda to that epoch in her history, at which it might be supposed to be concluded, we trust our readers have yet sufficient interest in her fate, to feel some curiosity to learn how far it was affected by the event we have just recorded. Passing over therefore the period of a year, as an interval in which scarcely any variation of incident worth recording occurred, Mr. St. Aubyn still being abroad and Catherine at Wimbledon, we will

return to Matilda after she had been a wife something more than a twelvemonth.

She was still fondly beloved by her husband—for she was not a being to be otherwise than loved, if gentleness, and calm good sense, and youthful beauty, can command affection; and to these attractions she added a daily increasing love for the partner of her fortune, the tenderness and sweetness of her disposition inclining her to feel the kindest sentiments for all who treated her affectionately; and, her strong sense of duty more particularly increasing every sentiment of this sort, when inspired by one whom she had invested with so sacred a title to her affection and regard.

Deeply interested in him, not only by the ties which connected their fate, but by the love his frank generous temper, and his many excellent qualities excited, Matilda, from smiling remonstrances, sometimes playfully, sometimes seriously, but always fondly given, now began occasionally to feel and look rather gravely, when she found how greatly the expenses of their first year's union exceeded the income which was to defray them. Her anxiety on this point was the greater, because, though much talked of as a thing to be every day proceeded upon, she found that Charles's occupation in the law, so far from being pursued as a means of adding to their fortune, was likely to be something worse than a mere nominal employment: as it introduced him to the acquaintance of a gay set of young men about the inns of court, whom he had known at college, and who appeared as indisposed to be studious as himself; only that, in their case, no wife or establish-

ment being to be supported, they had less to risk in the indulgence of their inclinations for amusement than he had.

To all the pleas she urged for their leading a more retired and less expensive life, he replied with an assurance that he would begin to read the very next day, and would seclude himself from all morning interruptions, and thus commence a sort of reform.

But the morrow came, and habit resumed its influence; the morning was frittered away in the duties of the toilette, calls at different chambers, and then the usual lounge of two hours at the west end of the town.

As yet Matilda was not very apprehensive; for she supposed that so vapid a manner of passing away existence would at length wear itself out, and that the mere love of novelty would induce him to adopt some other method of disposing of his time. If they were only tolerably prudent, she knew that their fortune would be adequate to their living even in a style of some elegance; but a terror sometimes took possession of her mind, that Charles wanted that stability of purpose, without which, reformation in a plan of living in such a labyrinth of temptations as London, entangled too as he was with a set of gay, thoughtless associates, would be a labour, from which he would, at every attempt, recoil with despair.

In this state of things she could scarcely be said to be happy, for a constant dread of her husband's being still further betrayed into error, hung upon her spirits, and made her pine for the conclusion of the winter season, which, in sending them for a time into the country, would give some check to dissipation and prodigality, in both of which she lamented to

know that they were indulging. But it was yet only April, the period in the metropolis for beginning, rather than ending, gaiety; and Mr. and Mrs. Belgrave having just arrived in town, they were involved through their means in an accession of company.

"Oh, that I could devise any method for making him love home a little more!" said Matilda to herself, as she one morning, about this time, remarked the heavy eyes and altered looks of her husband, whose late hours of the preceding night (which he had passed with some gay friends) had given him an appearance of lassitude and dejection, so opposite to the general good humour and sprightliness of his demeanour, that she could not contemplate him without a sigh. Having finished his breakfast, and read the newspaper, with an air that implied but a very languid interest in either one or the other, he threw himself upon a sofa, and for a much longer time than was usual with him, continued silent, and apparently deeply absorbed in thought.

His ruminations were so long, and, as she judged from an occasional sigh, so melancholy, that Matilda, anxious to take part in his feelings, and believing that an auspicious moment for offering fervent counsel was at hand, stole gently to his side, and as she tenderly took his hand within her own, she asked the reason of his silence and dejection.

He raised his head, and looked at her with a smile.

"I think, my dear Matty"—he said; and he paused.

"What do you think, Charles?"

He seemed to be irresolute; desirous to confide, but unwilling to speak. She saw the conflict in his

mind, and with more anxiety she repeated, "What is it you think, Charles?"

"That you are the best little wife in the world."

"Oh, Charles, this gaiety is assumed; you are not happy—I am sure you are not. My dear husband, tell me all that is upon your mind."

"God bless you, my dear little girl, I do love you, and that's the truth of it. But Matilda—I cannot—no, I cannot tell you—what a fool I have been!" and he got up, and walked about the room.

Matilda followed him. With the earnestness which women only feel, which women only can express, she besought him to be candid. She, at last, by her tender persuasion, brought him to resume his seat; but it was long before he gave the communication she sought. It was rather extorted than acknowledged, that he had been inveigled the preceding evening by the intreaties of one of his intimates to accompany him to a gambling house, at which place he had lost all the money he had then in his possession.

Matilda looked aghast at this intelligence. No profusion, no extravagance of which he had yet been guilty, so much awakened her fears, as to find him accessible to the temptations of the gaming table—that tomb of every virtuous, every human feeling.

"I knew how it would be," he exclaimed, a little hurt by the silence and sadness with which she heard his avowal. "I was a fool to tell you of it, for I might have been sure you could not, and would not forgive me."

"Oh, Charles, dont say that! It is not that I do not frankly and freely forgive an error into which any young man may once in his life be betrayed; but

I am thinking—if you should be tempted there again"—

"Oh never, never, Matilda! you may depend upon it I never shall be tempted there again!" and he spoke with so much feeling, so much solemnity of purpose, that Matilda believed and trusted; and, as in token of her forgiveness, she pressed his hand,

"Do but be firm, my dear Charles," she said, "do but justify the confidence I am so truly anxious to repose in you, and, much as this mistake may have cost you, I shall think it the best purchase you ever made in your life, if it does but procure you a little" —she paused and smiled.

"A little wisdom, I suppose you were going to be saucy enough to say," he replied; "but, Matilda, in one event of my life I am sure I displayed the most profound wisdom—wisdom that would have done honour to any of the sages of Greece or Rome."

"Indeed! I was not aware of any such circumstance in your history."

"Dont you think it was a great mark of wisdom to choose you for my wife? If you dont think so, I can tell you from my heart I do. What a comfort it is," he continued, in a strain of moralising, of which, though vexed to believe it, Matilda could not contemplate the probably transient duration without a smile, "what a comfort it is, when a man has done wrong, to have a counsellor at hand—not in the shape of a crabbed, cross old father, or a stiff, grumpy guardian—Oh, by the way, Matty, has old Willett been here within this day or two?"

"Not that I am aware of. Why did you think of him?"

"'Twas natural enough when I was talking of a grumpy guardian."

"Nay, Charles, I will not permit you to say that. He is the kindest, best old man that ever lived."

"He is well enough for an old one; but they are all queer, more or less. No notion of life—no more than they have of tying on a neckcloth. It was but the other day I met the old fellow, as I was driving my tilbury down St. James's Street (egad, I dont believe he ever goes to the west end of the town, if it's only twice a twelvemonth, and I dare say it is not oftener that he does go, but I am sure to run against him,) and then he begins in his dry sarcastic manner—'Well, Sir, how does Coke upon Lyttleton get on? I warrant you have got a folio under the seat there, to dip into occasionally, as opportunity serves.'"

Matilda would not have laughed at this particular moment if she could have helped it.

"Indeed, Charles," said she, endeavouring to look grave, "Mr. Willett is getting anxious about us. He thinks we are going on too fast, and—"

"He thinks!" repeated Charles, with much indignation, "and what the devil of occasion is there for him to think about us? What! I dare say, he would like to see my establishment in the same taste as his own! in that dark, dingy court in the City, in which my good father (God bless him for it) got so much money. There, old Willett would have liked to have seen me taking root; once a year perhaps, transplanted by means of a steam boat down to Margate; and now and then, by way of a little recreation, indulging in a shilling show at the Exhibition, or the British Gallery. This would have sufficed in the way of amusement!"

"No, no, Charles," and she laughed; "he would

have allowed you as much of it as he takes himself; and you know very well, he does not confine himself to a shilling show, or a voyage to Margate."

"No—sometimes I believe he goes to Brighton. But let him go where he will, or after what manner, is not the question. He is an excellent old man in his line; but its a thing unheard-of to expect me to model my life and conversation upon his antiquated notions. He would think I could do with two coats to my back—one for Sundays, and the other for week-days. Then, there is no occasion for a servant out of livery, or a man-servant at all; he would have my table attended by a simpering Abigail, in a flaunting cap, and a white apron, running about with a waiter in her hand, and thrusting it in every body's face, to shew *how well she can wait at table!*"

"Charles, how can you be so preposterous?" but she could not help smiling.

"But isn't it so, Matilda?"

"No, certainly not. You know to the contrary."

"But don't you think it very likely that he would admire such a plan?"

"No; I think he would not wish to see you act inconsistently, even if it were from a prudent motive. But he would be very glad, I believe, if you would retrench a little, and in good time, before we are *driven* to it"—and she sighed.

"But we won't be driven to it, love," said he, with more seriousness, affectionately kissing her cheek; we will adopt it of our own accord. And I do think Matty, there are a few idle expenses in which I am apt to indulge: yes, seriously speaking, I do think it will not do to go on always in the style we have been living in the last year and half. But now, you

know," he continued, "our house is furnished, and therefore that expense will never return."

"Ah, but the bills are not paid, Charles."

"Not all, but I shall pay every body before we leave town for the summer; and, that great expense over as I have just said, I am not aware of any thing very heavy."

"Oh! the champagne and burgundy, Charles, that came in last week."

"Oh, the wine! yes, that to be sure! but one has always long credit for wine, you know, so that is nothing."

He was proceeding to comfort her, by assurances that their affairs were, after all, in a most unembarrassed and prosperous state, when a noise in the hall attracted his attention; and, as he was going to ascertain the cause of it, the servant entered, and announced the arrival of a harp from Mr. Erard's."

"A harp!" exclaimed Matilda, "they must have made a mistake, I don't play upon the harp; speak to them, Charles."

"Oh, no, it's all right," he replied with much delight; "I only wish they had brought it at some other time. I intended you should have found it standing in the drawing-room, when you came home from the walk I meant to have taken you. Stupid oafs! they have quite destroyed the agreeable surprise I intended you."

"Indeed they have not destroyed the surprise, though it is any thing but an agreeable one," was the reply that suggested itself to Matilda's mind; but the joy which danced in her husband's eyes, at the mere thought of giving her pleasure, compelled her to repress any sentiment that might have sound-

ed discordant to his own. She only said, in her gentle manner, "you know, my love, I cannot play upon the harp; I wish you had not put yourself to this expense on my account."

"But you have been wishing a long time that you *could* play, Matilda; and now you can learn, you know. And, besides if you don't play upon it, we have always somebody coming here that does—the Hunters, and fifty more—oh, a harp really was quite essential."

She felt that nothing could be said on her side with advantage; but never was a present more mournfully received. Her affectionate heart was really grieved at being obliged to be vexed with a thoughtlessness, so much resulting from generous and good feeling, as to make her doubtful how far she ought to repine at it.

She was truly glad that he was so wholly occupied in assisting and directing the people where to place this unfortunate harp, as not to observe the dismay with which she received it; and by the time it was safely lodged in the drawing-room, she had commanded sufficient gratitude and pleasure, not only into her countenance but into her heart, as to make him quite happy by her admiration and approval of it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was the ordination of Providence, that Matilda's fate should be one of trial and of disappointment. But, enlightened by religious principle, strong, fervent, and sincere, she was, about this time, enabled to bear up against a visitation, severe enough to any bosom in which the new and delightful hopes of parental love have been cherished, but doubly severe to the anxious wife, who, in anticipating the hour of suffering, sees in the expected babe a tender tie, which, in the fond dream of hope and fancy, is to reclaim its wandering father, and cement the love that vain temptations had assailed.

This vision had, for many tedious months, been the solace for much sorrow. Charles was most anxious for a son: and she believed, with the credulity of one whose very existence hangs upon hope, that were she blessed with children, a new direction would be given to his warm affections, and, having a determined object, they would become concentred at home. But this gift was only bestowed to be taken away! The boon of "many a prayer" was granted —the tenderly desired son arrived; but only to prove to his mother's sorrowful, but pious heart, that she "knew not what she had asked."

By her devout temper, early and constantly habituated to refer every event to the dispensation of her

maker, the loss of her child a few days after his birth, though an affliction of the heaviest nature, was regarded principally as the means of hallowing her mind, and bringing every repining murmur into subjection.

Charles had no such resources in his trial; upon him, therefore, it fell with peculiar heaviness. Matilda had never seen him so truly dejected as upon this occasion. She resolved, the first moment which offered, after her returning strength permitted such an effort (if indeed the interval of a few days did not, in restoring him to old pursuits and his usual spirits, obviate all chance of her having any opportunity of speaking,) she resolved to take advantage of his state of feeling, and addressing him, for the first time, in a religious strain, endeavour to soften a heart which, however generous and affectionate in its natural emotions, was yet she grieved to be compelled to dread, on spiritual things "a heart of stone."

"There, there!" she would exclaim, "is the solution of all! Oh, what hope!—what expectation can there be of one who lives 'without God in the world!'—Had I but sufficiently thought of this!—had I but considered!—But it was ordained—and who shall say that he is yet beyond the reach of these things? I have been too passive—I might perhaps have prevailed. If I could but get him to *think*—oh, if it were but given me!"—and, full of her pious purpose, she mused over it with hope scarce less intense than that with which she had watched the promise of the cherished one, so recently blighted.

A moment arrived—as she believed an auspicious

one. She was now sufficiently recovered to change her apartment for her dressing-room adjoining to it; where she was frequently visited by her mother, who, in possession of two or three children, whom she had severally, as they made their appearance, considered as supernumeraries, came every day to repeat, for her daughter's consolation, the usual common-place, that nobody can die at a better stage of life than infancy.

It was not indeed difficult to discover that she considered the loss of the poor baby as rather a fortunate occurrence; but the view she took on this side of the subject being rather narrow, and nothing but a very exalted one sufficing to reconcile his death to his disappointed mother, it was rather a relief than otherwise, when Mrs. Belgrave, having finished her remarks, rung for her carriage, and made her exit.

"I could almost wish that your mother would not come so constantly, love," said Charles, after she had departed from one of these morning visits of consolation. "She certainly says nothing but what we knew before; and, I think, she only leaves you ten times more unhappy than she found you."

"Come, my dear girl," he continued with earnest affection, kissing her as he spoke, and wiping from her pale cheek the tears that streamed from it; "do not be thus dejected! Cheer up, Matty, you shall never shed another tear if I can help it. I have often given you pain—I know I have, my dear love; but somehow, this sorrow has made me think more seriously than I ever did before; and it does appear to me that this sort of life I am leading is a very idle and extravagant one, to say the least of it, and I will, I am determined, turn over a new leaf."

"Ah, Charles!" and she looked at him with a smile, but with swimming eyes.

"You doubt me, Matilda and I admit you have some cause for your doubts; for you have often had occasion to remark the instability of my purposes. But I never thought so earnestly as I have done the last week or two. I have *said* 'I cannot go on thus —I must adopt some other plan of life;' but it was when I was bothered for money that I said so, not because I saw any thing unsatisfactory in the course I was pursuing, not because I *felt* that it was a wrong one."

"But now you do feel it to be so;" she inquired with joyful eagerness.

"Indeed I do," he replied with as much earnestness as possible.

"Then I am happy—oh, never can I regret the loss of my baby, very heavy as the disappointment was, if this sorrow has been the means of awakening your mind to reflection. My dear Charles," she continued, taking his hand, and looking at him with a countenance of the sweetest persuasion, "that I *could* but influence you to think of the things that belong to your peace! for you have not yet found them—you say that you have not, and I know that you say true. They are not in dissipation, and a round of frivolous engagements; they are not in profuse expenditure; for of the thousands that we have spent since our marriage, how small is the sum that we have devoted to the necessaries—or to the comforts of life.

"*We*, Matilda!" he repeated, "say *you*, Charles. Do not unite your name with mine, in condemning the extravagance that has reigned here. *You* would

have done right—*you* would have persuaded—it is I only that deserve to be reproved."

"I would not exempt myself from censure," she replied, "for I have been too passive. I did not urge and re-urge my counsels. I was afraid of wearying you. I was ashamed to say all that I could and would fain have said to influence you. But I will shrink no more from my duty. It is my duty, as it is my fervent desire, to save, if I can, one so near and dear to me from destruction; for what but destruction can follow you, if, blind to every warning, you go on still in this thoughtless course? It is the want of thought, the want of reflection, which has so far misled you; and your course has hitherto been too prosperous, too much uninterrupted by disappointment, to awaken consideration of any serious kind. Affliction has been sent—in mercy sent. Oh, my beloved Charles, nourish the thoughts it dictates; do not let them die away in empty words, but strive to cherish them into action."

"Believe me, Matilda, they shall not die away in words; I *will* cherish them into action."

Her pious heart trembled within her at this assurance so positively, but as she considered it, so heedlessly given. With the meekness of one nurtured in the fear of her maker, and assuming as the first grand principle of Christian belief, her utter incapacity of herself to do any thing that was right or pleasing to him, it sounded almost like impiety to assert, with the boldness of one confident of his own strength and ability, that an event of any kind should be accomplished, much less an event that, as she conceived it, required that change of heart and purpose, which

the wisest of human creatures cannot produce of hi self.

"They *shall not* die away! I *will* cherish th into action," she repeated, in low but impressive cents, looking at him with steady solemnity as spoke. "You may *say* that, Charles, but that is *you* can do."

"Am I then a complete child!" he replied, some irritation, for he was far from comprehend her real meaning.

"You must be as a child before you can *fully* u derstand your utter insufficiency of yourself *to be* yourself."

Now indeed he began to catch a glimpse of l meaning. The timidity of her nature had cau her to perform her constant devotions, *and all her* tle acts of charity and love, with a secresy, whi but for her delicate approaches to the subject in l admonitions to him, and her constant performance every branch of her duty, would have rendered sentiments upon religion still a matter to be gues at by him.

But now she spoke more intelligibly upon t point than she had ever yet spoken; and unless sirous to pass for something worse than indiffer to such things, he could not avoid to understand h or at least to signify that he knew to what she alu ed. To *understand*, poor Matilda speedily fou was not yet within his power.

"Ah, Matty, you are now getting beyond me! you confine yourself to plain reasoning, and will s pose I can make use of such understanding as I p sess"—

"You cannot, Charles, avail yourself of your understanding," and she interrupted him.

"Not avail myself of my understanding!" and he looked at her as if he doubted whether she were not suddenly bereaved of her's. "I can tell whether this is my right hand, or this is my left! I can tell whether two and two make four!"

"Yes, you may tell that, but you cannot tell whether you can go through this day without breaking resolutions, or committing error. You may say that you will not do such and such things; you have said so frequently, but you have done them nevertheless."

"We are all liable to temptation," he replied; "even *your* doctrines admit that."

"Assuredly they do; but they provide us with the only arms against it."

"What are they!"

"Humility, distrust, and a terror of our own weakness; which instinctively lead us to pray for help from Him who alone can help and save us from temptation."

He turned away, and was silent; and Matilda trusted and believed that her reply had touched his heart. But the heart which is to be moved by an appeal like that she had just made, must possess a germ of feeling, of a kind which Charles Harcourt had not within him.

"Assuredly this is all right," said he; "we are taught it in our infancy, at school and at Church; and that a proper sense of religion every person ought to possess, I am quite ready to admit—but my dear Matty, if our whole lives were to pass in praying against every temptation that assails us, we should

be eternally upon our knees—all the concerns of lif
would be tasteless—business would stagnate—ever
thing would be at a stand-still—and we should s
of us, in the different degrees of our spiritual attai
ments, be more or less fit for Bedlam. I have sa
and I will abide by what I have said," he contin
with more gravity, observing the disappointed
pression of her face at hearing, what appeared to h
the effusion of that untameable levity which she
lieved to be the root of all her husband's errors—
have said, that I perceive the mistakes I have *hith*
to made in my progress through life, and that *I w*
endeavour to exercise the understanding with whi
I am endowed, to rectify them for the future. I ha
a belief in my Maker, as well as you—a belief wh
convinces me that He has not given *me any* facu
of my mind for a useless purpose. My reason is
guide me—and though it has hitherto, I am asha
ed to say, been of small benefit to me, it shall be
no longer. So cheer up, Matty—and don't give w
to these desponding notions: such gloomy ideas s
ing upon your feelings at such a time as this, wh
your mind is weakened by affliction, and your hea
and strength so imperfectly re-established, may
quite fatal. I do beg my love, you will endeav
to banish them. I am going down Conduit Stree
I will look in at Colburn's, and see if I can find
any thing new to read," and as he spoke, he ag
affectionately kissed her, and once more repeat
his injunctions, to renounce all vapourish imagi
tions, he took his leave. But it was no vapour
imagination, as she well knew which prompted
tears that fell from her eyes, as soon as his absen
left her at liberty to indulge the sorrow of her hea

It was despair!—No ray of hope of her husband's reformation could cheer her spirits, for he was wholly inaccessible on the only side where she would have wished, or considered it of any consequence, to find him vulnerable.

"Alas," she thought, as she sobbed over this idea, "I once fancied that a good heart, and a generous disposition presented all the materials for right conduct which human frailty could desire; but what is there to work upon in that heart, which no sublime or pious thought has involuntarily visited? which exists for years, in the midst of miracles, for itself and all about it is a miracle to a reflecting mind, without one aspiration after something better, something holier than what its finite capacity perceives to exist! But he is my husband!" she continued after a short musing, in which she had struggled to check every repining sigh, and much more, every querulous complaint that Charles had been made to differ in nature from herself. "He is my husband! If I cannot persuade or guide him, I can yet entreat for him—my prayers, perhaps, may be permitted to prevail!"

END OF VOL. I.

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

21496.47.9
Trials;
Widener Library
003188771
3 2044 086 829 462